DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 742 JC 020 530

AUTHOR	Johnson, Terri Lynn
TITLE	Survival Strategies of African-American Women in Community Colleges.
PUB DATE	2001-05-00
NOTE	153p.; Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Doctoral Dissertations (041)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; *Black Students; *Blacks; College Role; *Community Colleges; *Educational Environment; Educational Objectives; *Females; Mentors; Student Characteristics; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*African Americans

ABSTRACT

This qualitative dissertation examines the survival strategies of African-American women attending a community college. It identifies specific intervention strategies that will improve the quality of such women's collegiate experience and will facilitate persistence. A portraiture research methodology was used to collect data on 10 participants attending a community college. The participants varied by age, program of study, marital status and motherhood. The results of the study indicated that the participants used seven major strategies to survive in a community college: support from family members; assuming responsibility for one's own success; spirituality, or the belief in the redeeming power of a supreme being; support from within the institutional climate of the college; employment needs and academic aspirations; financial investments and obligations; and encouragement of friends and others during college matriculation. Recommendations for intervention and support based on the research findings were also provided: (1) creating orientation programs for African-American women; (2) developing a mentorship program; (3) designing support groups; (4) assigning students "life advisors;" (5) recruiting African-American administrators, faculty, and staff; (6) conducting workshops and mini-courses on survival strategies, and (7) developing arts and speakers series of African-American women. Appended are the participant letter and interview protocol. (Contains 110 references.) (RC)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 466 742

Survival Strategies of African-American Women in Community College

By

Terri Lynn Johnson, B.A, M.Ed

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2001

JC 020 630

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Johnson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Copyright

By

Terri Lynn Johnson

2001

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God who is the head of my life, to my Parents, Charles Vernon and Lazelle for all of their unwavering love and support, to Troy for his strength, and to Dr. Geneva Gay without whom none of this would be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is the culmination of three years of study and hard work and I gratefully acknowledge the people without whom this paper could not have been written.

I would first like to thank Dr. Donald G. Phelps for the opportunity to attend The University of Texas at Austin. I further extend my profound gratitude to Dr Phelps and my other committee members (Dr. John E. Roueche, Dr. Norvell Northcutt, Dr. Jay Scribner, and Dr. Irene Owens) for all of their support, encouragement and excellent advice.

I am deeply grateful for all of the cooperation I received from the ten women who so graciously gave me their time, information, and stories.

To my mother, father, Troy, and my family for all of their prayers, love, support and encouragement for which I shall forever be grateful.

I also extend special acknowledgements to:

Dr. Diane Gillespie for her encouragement, which gave me confidence.
Colette Blangy for her expert editing skills.
First A.M.E. Church for their prayers and encouragement
Lynda Jones for her exceptional friendship
Dr. Charles Mitchell for providing a venue for my administrative internship and resources for my study.
Dr. Georgia McDade for her advice, insight and inspiration.

Survival Strategies of African-American Women in Community College

Publication No. _____

Terri Lynn Johnson Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin 2001

Supervisor, Dr. Donald G. Phelps

ABSTRACT

This study examined the survival strategies of African-American women in a community college. It was important to study this issue because there is very little research information available about why African-American women who are succeeding in community college do so. Most of the research that does exist offers very general information; tends to group all African-American students together; and emphasizes descriptions of enrollment trends. However, it does indicate that an academic and social fit with the institution is needed for African-Americans to persist in higher education. Students must feel that the institution is accessible and a welcome place, and that there are programs and activities that meet their needs.

A portraiture research methodology was used to collect the data in this study. The ten participants attended SSS College. They were interviewed individually and in focus groups. The women varied in age, program of study, martial status and motherhood. Some of the participants had medical conditions that prevented them from working, while others worked as they attended college

and raised their children.

The results of the study indicated that the participants used seven major strategies to survive in community college. These were: support from family members; assuming responsibility for one's own success; spirituality, or the belief in the redeeming power of a Supreme Being; support from within the institutional climate of the college; employment needs and academic aspirations; finances investments and obligations; and encouragement of friends and others during college matriculation

Recommendations also were made for future research. These included survey, observational and ethnographical studies to compare behavioral actions with self-reported reflection; African-American women in different geographical locations and other types of postsecondary educational settings; African-American women with men; and African Americans with women from other ethnic groups of color in community college.

Table of Contents

Chapter one: Introduction
Overview 1-3
Statement of the research problem 4-5
Purpose of the study 5-6
Research Questions 6
Significance of the problem 6-8
Assumptions and Limitations 8-9
Definition of terms 10
Summary 10-11

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature
Introduction 12-18
Institutional Racism 18-25
Persistence of African-American Students in Higher Education 25-30
Supportive and Non-Supportive Networks 30-32
African-American Women Students in Higher Education 32-34
History of African-American Women in Higher Education 34-39
Summary 39

Chapter Three: Methodology
Introduction 40
Research Design 40-41
Pilot Study 41-42
Selecting Participants 42-44
Data Collection 44-46
Data Analysis 46-51
Summary 51

Chapter Four: Results
Introduction 52
Family 52-59
Responsibility of Self for Success 59-72
Self Determination and Motivation 60-63
Goal Setting 63-65
Building a Foundation 65-67
Seeking Assistance 67-70
Minimizing Struggle 70-72
Spirituality 72-76

Institutional Climate 76-85
Employment 85-88
Finances 89-92
Encouragement of Friends/Others 92-96
Summary 96-97

Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations
Introduction 98
Summary 98-102
Discussion 102-116
Recommendations for Practice 116-122
Recommendations for Research 123-126
Final Statement 126-127
Appendices 128
Participant Letter 129-130
Interview Protocol 131-132
Bibliography 133-142
Vita 143

List of Tables

Table 1. 43

Figure 1 97

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Community colleges are important to African-American students because they have been either underprepared or lack the resources to attend four-year colleges (Rendon, 1988). Thus, significant members of them chose this option a their entry into higher education. The Alliance for Excellence (1993) noted that between 1988 and 1993, minority student enrollment in community colleges in the United States increased by 6.4 percent. Community colleges are becoming an avenue for more and more African Americans to gain access to higher education (Richardson & Bender, 1987; Blackwell, 1982). Yet, there are few studies about African Americans in community college settings. Jackson (1996) noted, "a considerable gap exists in the literature with regard to African Americans enrolled in community colleges" (p. 6).

According to Lanni (1997), unlike four-year institutions, community colleges historically have been established to meet students where they are in life. They provide remedial education, various support programs, advising and counseling. Short-term programs offer students an opportunity to obtain a specific skill so that they can join the work force, while Associate of Arts degrees offer them the chance to enroll in four-year colleges to ultimately obtain a Bachelor's degree. Such offerings and supportive services can be critical to African-American students if they know how to take advantage of them.

Some researchers have argued that community colleges can be a nurturing environment for African-American students. Blau (1996), for example, found that community colleges were more comfortable for African-American students than traditional four-year institutions. Community colleges also are more economically accessible and motivational for financially disadvantaged African-American students. Many of these individuals are first generation college students and may not have been encouraged or exposed to higher education during their formative years, or have the fiscal resources to make higher education feasible. As a result, college, especially four-year universities, may not have been a priority. Because community colleges are used to serving non-traditional and low-income students, they try to bridge the gap between their backgrounds and intellectual and economic potential.

Several researchers, such as Roueche (1993) have described the non-traditional nature of community college students. Many African-American students certainly fall into this category. Many community college students attend school part-time because they must work full time. Others have commitments to nuclear and extended family members. Some drop in and out of school, which extends their completion of programs longer than usual periods of time. Many students return after a long absence after high school graduation, and others have completed General Education Degrees (GEDs). Community colleges appeal to such non-traditional students because class schedules are flexible and more easily coordinated with work and family obligations. These colleges also offer study skills classes, tutoring, small classes, and accessible instructors. Finally, many

African-American students attend community colleges because of their convenient locations. All of these factors can make community colleges welcome places to attend especially for African Americans.

There are several statistical and conceptual studies (Cangemi, 1979; Tinto, 1987; Henton, 1978; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bennett, 1995; Willie, Gairbaldi, & Reed, 1991; Clewell & Anderson, 1992) on the persistence of African-American students in higher education, but few qualitative ones that describe the experiences of students, especially in community colleges. This absence is especially true for African-American women students.

Many researchers (Clark & Crawford, 1992; Clewell, 1986; Tinto, 1982; Allen, 1981; Bean, 1980) have examined reasons why students drop out of college. Among the contributing factors are procrastination, negative influence of family, inability to ask for help, fear of failure, loneliness, self-doubt, value conflicts, and unrealistic academic goals. Many African-American students also have academic difficulties, feel social isolation, and experience a sense of bewilderment when in college. Other factors leading to low college persistence rates include faculty members and administrators who are inhospitable and insensitive to the unique cultural experience of African-American women. However, those students who persist in college tend to integrate their social and academic lives.

Statement of the Research Problem

Several research studies provided statistical (Richardson & Bender, 1987; Astin, 1993; Wilds & Wilson, 1995;) descriptions of African-American female students who matriculate through college, but none have examined the quality of their experiences as they move through the system. The research available reveals that the social and academic environment of the institution plays a major role in the college persistence of African-American women (Clark & Crawford, 1992; Clewell, 1986; 1982; Tinto, 1982; Allen, 1981; and Bean 1980).

African-American women students make up 9.5 percent of community college enrollment, which is slightly higher than African-American men (Wilds & Wilson, 1995). With their open door policies, community colleges are attracting more and more African-American women. These institutions are some of the most important vehicles for minority students to attain a college-based education.

To increase the persistence rates of African-American students and improve the quality of their collegiate experiences, community colleges need to develop multiple intervention strategies. These should be based on the specific need of different groups of students. One way to identify these needs is to study the various groups by asking members to identify factors that facilitate or are obstacles to their survival and persistence in college. Remediation programs should then be designed and implemented that respond to these specified needs. Therefore, many different support programs may have to be designed to serve the needs of students from different ethnic, gender, and cultural

backgrounds. For example, if community colleges help African-American women become more involved in campus life they may feel more intimately connected to the academic and social environment of the college, and perform better in their academic programs and achieve higher rates of completion.

Purpose of the study

Howard-Vital (1989) noted that the study of African-American women in higher education "has suffered from scholarly disinterest and from perspectives that are andocentric and/or ethnocentric (p.189). In that same article she recognized the "need for a continuous generation of paradigms, empirical testing of paradigms, and an examination of existing paradigms to determine how they illuminate, obscure, or predict experiences of African-American women in different higher education milieus. Without this intellectual activity African-American women will become invisible, isolated, and powerless" (p.189). Much is written regarding African Americans in higher education, but community colleges and women students are under-represented in this scholarship (Davis & Casey, 1999).

Despite the barriers many African-American women face in higher education, many do persist to the completion of their programs of study. Why and how this is accomplished in community colleges is the primary purpose of this study. These issues are examined from the perspectives and self-reports of African-American women students. A portraiture research methodology is used to collect the necessary data. Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described portraiture as a technique for capturing "the richness, complexity,

and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context" (p.3). The portraits are drawn with words and are shaped by both the researcher and the participants involved in the research. The portraitures that result from this study may help improve understanding of why some African-American women stay in college until a degree or certification program is completed and others do not. They also can be the basis for designing institutional programs to help improve their college persistence rates.

Research Questions

Three major questions are examined in this study. These are:

1) What survival strategies do African-American women use to persist in community colleges?
2) What are the perceptions of African-American women regarding their own survival in community colleges?
3) What actions can community colleges take to increase the persistence levels of African-American students?

Significance of the study

African-American women are entering community college in larger numbers each year. Yet very little research to date deals with their college experiences. This study begins to fill that gap. It starts a line of inquiry that should be pursued much more extensively by other researches in the field. This is

necessary because African-American women comprise a high number of community college students. Their educational needs cannot be served without the information that studies like this one generated.

In previous research few African-American women have had the opportunity to share their personal experiences in community colleges and how they cope with the challenges of acquiring a higher education. This study assumed that personal stories of students can provide powerful insights on educational issues that affect their achievement. It provided opportunities for the 10 participants to explain from their own vantage points what life was like for them and the mechanisms they developed to survive in community college. Their explanations are insightful for future research and program interventions.

The results of this study will broaden the conversation among theorists, researchers, and practitioners about community college education for African-American women. It does so by posing questions about how general principles and claims of college persistence apply to particular populations of students; examining whether the survival strategies of African-American women are unique from other groups; whether community college survival strategies are location specific; and why some projected survival strategies are not used by African-American women.

This study found some success possibilities in unexpected places. According to some criteria the participants in this study should have been

academic failures who would not even imagine higher education as a possibility in their lives. This was not the case. The women displayed strength, perseverance, and resiliency in pursuing their community college education. Although unlikely by conventional standards they are role models for others. Their experiences suggest that some commonly used concepts and principles about college success may need to be redefined when applied to African-American women.

Finally, this study offers some pragmatic ideas for community colleges to consider in designing intervention programs for African-American women. These ideas emphasize that institutional efforts to improve persistence rates should be directly linked to the self-declared needs of the students for whom they are intended. Consequently, parallel support programs in community colleges may be necessary for different ethnic and gender groups.

Assumptions and Limitations

In the course of this study several assumptions were made that are supported by previous research and scholarship. These include:

- African-American students drop out of college more often than other students (Blau, 1996).
- The reasons African-American students stay in college are a combination of institutional, social, and individual factors (Salies, 1990; Stoecker, 1971).

- A gap exists in the research and scholarship on African Americans in higher education; it involves women and community colleges (Howard-Vital, 1989; Davies & Casey, 1999).

There were four major limitations of this study. First, it focused on a sample of participants from a single institution, thereby limiting the ability to generalize the results to community colleges and African-American women students. Second, this study included only African-Americans and did not speak to other racial groups. Yet, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans have issues in higher education that should be examined. Furthermore, only women participated in the study, African-American en in community colleges, other racial and ethnic groups also need to be studied. They may have survival issues and strategies very different from women. Third, the study depended exclusively on the self-reporting of African-American community college women students. This technique for collecting data can be problematic because the research participants may not be candid in some of their responses. A fourth limitation was the potential biasing effects of the researcher. All data were collected and analyzed by the researcher. While caution was used in identifying and crosschecking segments of the data, it is still possible that the researcher's personal interests in the issues being studied may have skewed some of the results.

Definition of Terms

Several specific terms were used in conceptualizing and designing this study. Defining them may help improve understanding of how the data were collected, how it is presented, and how it is interpreted. These terms included the following:

Attrition – Reduction in a school's student population as a result of transfer or dropouts. (Stzutz, 1989)

Dropout – Students who had originally planned to complete a college program or degree but who subsequently failed to do so. (Astin, 1975).

Persister – Any student who stays in college and earns a degree (Equal education opportunity for Blacks in U.S. Higher Education, 1976).

Portraiture - "A method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and the subtlety of human experience and organizational life" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis 1997, p.xv).

Retention – An institution "retains" a student when he or she persists in college until a program of study is completed and a degree is conferred (Szutz, 1989).

Summary

Chapter One consisted of an introduction to the research study of this dissertation. It included the statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, major assumptions and limitations of the study, and the definitions of terms used in the study.

The research and scholarship pertinent to this investigation of the survival strategies of African-American women in community colleges are summarized in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

In the United States of America, African Americans have been afforded limited opportunities to attend institutions of higher education (Clewell & Anderson 1992). Only since World War II have African Americans attended college in significant numbers; their entry has required tremendous struggle. Bennett (1995) noted that at the end of World War II "1.2 percent of Blacks had completed baccalaureate degrees, compared to 5.4 percent of native Whites" (p. 668). Today, the numbers are higher—9.4 percent in 1980, 9.3 percent in 1990, and 10.2 percent in 1993 (Mini-Digest of Education Statistics, 1995), but the percentages have not increased dramatically since the 1980s. One means of compensating for practices of exclusion from and discrimination in mainstream institutions of higher education was the creation historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded by philanthropists, churches, the Black community, and the government to give African Americans access to higher education, and thus a better chance in life. The first of these institutions (Cheney University in Pennsylvania) was established in 1837. Since then more than 125 other HBCUs have been created. According to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) 118 of those institutions remained in 1999. (http://www.NAFEO.org).

HBCUs "enroll less than 20% of African American undergraduates but award one third of all B.A degrees and a significant number of advanced degrees earned by African Americans" (http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/hbcu/). African Americans continue to attend predominately white colleges and universities, but their retention rates in these institutions have been problematic (Allen, 1987). Many African Americans have not acquired the skills to take advantage of the opportunity to go or stay in college because they have attended inferior schools -- schools burdened with miniscule finances, overworked teachers, and inadequate materials. Other African-American students do not have the desire to take advantage of the opportunity to go and stay in college because they have not been exposed to people who have pursued higher education. The problem is worsened when predominately white educational institutions use Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores and high school grade point averages (GPA) as factors for admission. Many African-American students do not meet these traditional criteria for college admission. Consequently, many seeking higher education attend community colleges because they are unprepared or lack the resources to attend four-year colleges (Rendon, 1988).

Thus, community colleges are important in educating African-American students for a number of reasons. First, the mix and the goals of the faculty are different from those of four-year institutions. Second, one is apt to find more ethnic, cultural, social and racial diversity among community college student populations than is found in four-year institutions. Third, community colleges generally provide developmental and remedial courses for students who take the placement test and are not prepared for college reading,

writing, and math. Finally, community colleges are smaller, providing more individualized attention to students through smaller class sizes, and easier access to professors. These factors help to explain why non-traditional and marginal students gravitate to community colleges, and why enrollment of African Americans in these institutions is increasing (Richardson & Bender, 1987; Alliance for Excellence, 1993).

What makes a student enroll in community college? What makes one student complete a program early? What makes another student willingly work on a two-year program for four years? It is difficult to answers these questions definitively because there are so few studies about African Americans in community college settings. However, some scholars and theorists have provided some speculative answers.

One of these answers suggest that unlike four-year institutions, community colleges historically have been established to meet students where they are in life. Pursuing this claim Lanni (1997) conducted an on-going longitudinal study that focused on the success of African Americans in higher education. The study concluded that as a group African-American students are likely to have different backgrounds and preparedness skills than what is needed to succeed in higher education. The study was conducted to determine what is needed to prepare students for success in college. The information was collected from 522 African-Americans and 893 European Americans who were first-time college students in the fall of 1990. Lanni found that the colleges provided remedial education, various support programs, and advising and counseling. Short-term programs offered students an opportunity to obtain specific vocational skills so

that they could join the work force. Associate of Arts and Science degrees offered them the chance to enroll in a four-year college to obtain a Bachelor's degree.

Blau and Marshall (1996) examined the institutional supports that facilitate African-American and white student success in higher education and beyond. Their study focused on two-year public colleges, and examined both transfer and certificate programs. Multiple regression analysis was used to look at the effects of each college and county characteristic while controlling for the impact of the other characteristics, such as college size, program orientation, part-time enrollment, and college facilities. Three policy implications emerged from this study. First, smaller institutions are more conducive to students completing their degrees than larger schools. Second, a growing emphasis on certificate programs in the two-year college might have a negative impact on the educational careers of students who intend to pursue associate degrees. Third, minority students benefit from programs that help bridge the home to school gap. Blau and Marshall also found that community colleges were "more comfortable" for African-American students than traditional four-year institutions. In addition to supportive services, community colleges are economically more accessible to financially disadvantaged African-American students. Since many of them are first generation college students; they may not have some of the values, ethics, and habits that are needed persist successfully in college. Because community colleges are accustomed to serving non-traditional students, they try to bridge these gaps in students' backgrounds by the programs they offer and the learning climate created on campus.

Roueche and Roueche (1993) described the non-traditional nature of community college students. Their descriptions fit many African-American students, especially women. A large number attend school part-time because they must work full-time. Others have commitments to their nuclear family and extended family members. Many years lapse between high school graduation or when General Education Degrees (GED) are received and when community college students begin. Also, these institutions have a host of features that are compatible with their non-traditional populations. These include flexible class schedules, study skills classes, tutoring, small class sizes, and convenient locations.

Because of these advantages, the percentage of African-American students in community colleges has increased, but many retention problems remain. Wilds and Wilson (1998) report that only 8.8 percent of associate degrees were awarded to African-American community college students in 1995. This represented a 3.7 percent increase from 1985. Further studies document that African-American students often stop or drop out before completing their associate degrees. Sailes (1990) conducted a study to determine the reasons why African Americans dropped out of Indiana University prior to graduation. A questionnaire was sent to all those who had left the college in the past two years. The questionnaire identified 48 institutional factors and asked the participants to respond to each one. Forty-six African-Americans (20 males and 26 females) returned the instrument. Several factors contributed to African-American students leaving Indiana University without completing their degrees. These included academic problems, financial

difficulties, unsuitable campus social environment, and pursuing full-time employment. Such factors might affect African Americans disproportionately because of their often non-traditional status. Sailes concluded that the needs of African-American students are different from white students. The University should recognize this fact and respond appropriately to it.

Community colleges can intervene to counteract these retention problems by helping students with financial aid, and increasing satisfaction levels and academic preparedness. Supportive practices are one way for community colleges to encourage African-American students to remain in school. Early identification and intervention, mentoring, academic assessment, and placement programs have proven to be effective (Jackson, 1996; Rowser, 1997). Tinto (1987) concluded from his studies on why students drop out of college, that retention programs, which integrate students into the academic life of the college, are the most successful. To accomplish this integration, institutions need to understand the strengths that African-Americans students bring with them to school. What are these strengths? According to Tinto (1987) they are resiliency, perseverance, and determination. Unfortunately, most of the literature on African Americans and retention has focused on their deficiencies instead of their competencies. Such a focus is part of the racist beliefs and practices that prevent African-American students from fully integrating into community colleges and other higher education institutions. Negative interpretation of African-American students and ethnocentric views

of education justify power relations and prevent institutions from understanding the strengths these students bring with them to college.

Institutional Racism

Tracing the history of research on African-American students during the 1960s, Banks (1995) stated that the predominate paradigm was one of "cultural deprivation" (p.15). He defined a paradigm as "a system of explanations that guides policy and action" (p.15). According to the cultural deprivation paradigm, African-American children fail academically because their socialization in the home does not adequately prepare them for schooling. Influenced by the cultural deprivation theorists (Davis, 1948/1962; Riessman, 1962; Hale-Benson, 1982; Shade, 1982), institutions of higher education often attribute achievement problems to individuals rather than examining how the institutions might be contributing to the failure of students.

In an article on "Race and Schooling of Black Americans," Steele (1992) discussed some of the reasons more than half of African-Americans fail to complete their college degrees. He noted that while there is no recipe to fix the problems there is now a better understanding of corrective approaches for student persistence. These approaches include valuing the student-teacher relationship, racial integration in public schools, colleges, and universities, and integrating the particulars of African-American life and culture into mainstream school curricula. In his analogies Steele spoke of the deficit model and asserted that many African-American students are under-prepared for higher

education. They do not know the rules of the institution, and thus struggle to understand its culture and the sources of power within it (Steele, 1992). For those with power and privilege, the rules appear to be readily available to and for everyone. Ladson-Billings (1994), The Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children discussed examples and strategies for teaching African-American students effectively. They derived from a study of eight successful teachers that included a mixture of qualitative research and lived reality. Ladson-Billings explained that the deficit model assumes that anyone who is strong and motivated will be able to move through the system successfully. When African-American students do not, the failure lies inside them or their supposedly inadequate backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Banks (1995) believed that viewing a racial or ethnic group through such a negative lens perpetuates institutional racism. Dent (1974) defined institutional racism as "a pattern of acts, a well-established set of organizational procedures, formal or informal, which are woven into the operational structure of the organization or institution which subordinates a person or group because of race" (p. 4). Feagin (1995) and Banks (1995) argued that many institutions of higher education have routinely reflected and responded to the white student population, but have paid little attention to African-American students. Feagin and Sikes (1995) discussed the pressure of being African-American in predominantly white colleges and universities. The students in their study were aware of the white culture on the campus and the lack of African-American culture on the same. They were alienated and miserable but understood the importance of a degree and stay at

the institution. Feagin and Sikes stated that one reason for the alienating environment is the lack of significant changes in higher education institutions since the 1960s. For the most part these institutions have made little attempts to incorporate African-American values, interests, history, and experiences into the core campus culture.

One of the manifestations of institutional racism is the curriculum. African-American students are often faced with a lack of diversity in the curriculum they study. Some educators include very little discussion of minorities' contributions; others choose to portray minorities in a negative light; still others completely ignore them. Many white teachers are more comfortable teaching curriculum that is familiar to them and often have little training in diverse curriculum. This lack of an inclusive curriculum can result in students from different ethnic minority groups feeling as if they have no place in the academic world.

Delpit's Other People's Children (1995) depicted how institutional racism and power affect African-American students in elementary school. For her, the culture of power combines invisible and visible rules and regulations, which leave African-American students out of the curriculum and results in their feeling out of place in the classroom. It involves "the power of the teacher over the students; the power of publishers over textbooks; and the power of an individual or group to determine another's intelligence or 'normalcy'" (p.24-25). She also noted that those who have power make up the rules of power.

Delpit explained that students from middle class homes tend to do better in school because the culture of the school is based on middle and upper class thinking. Those who have the power are usually those from higher socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, who have support at home, and who are well educated. Those who have power do not realize they have power, or are not very willing to admit they have it. However, those who lack power are well aware of its existence and their lack of it. Finally, Delpit stated that if those with influence disproportionate to other groups explain the rules to those who lack power they will find it easier to obtain power. Quite simply, they will know what to do and how to do it. Consequently, they will be less likely to be victimized by institutional racism.

When applied across educational levels, Delpit's theories illustrate that many white educators who have power often do not understand why African-American students cannot interact with them in terms of predominant institutional values. For these dynamics to change African-American students must acquire explicit instruction in power relations so that they can interact better with the power brokers.

Many white students with middle to upper middle class backgrounds are knowledgeable about how to navigate the educational system. They know how to seek out other students who have been successful and are willing to share what they know with those who need assistance. African-American students who are first generation college goers may not have the knowledge in their backgrounds to work through the system when they arrive at the college. This knowledge is something that is to be discovered on their own.

Delpit's groundbreaking study illustrated the complexity of institutional racism and how exclusion and insensitive practices begin so early in life. This research breaks down the myths connected to the deficit model by stating that the issues of power are what contribute to students appearing to be deficient. The institution assumes the students are deficient, when in reality, those who have power are treating them differently.

Tatum (1999), presenting an analysis of power similar to Delpit's, described the ways that institutions empower some but disempower others. Her study focused on middle and high school students. It revealed how high school students who are disempowered tend to segregate themselves in an attempt to gain some of the power they do not have by being members of the subordinate group. These students form networks that work for them but are not part of the normative structures that operate throughout schools. Tatum (1999) defined power as "White privilege" or "The systematic advantages of being white" (p. 8). In elaborating on how the "power privilege" works, she suggested that in the areas where persons are members of the dominant or advantaged social group, the category is not mentioned. That element of their identity is so taken for granted that it goes without comment. It is taken for granted by them because it is taken for granted by the dominant culture (p.21). Furthermore,

> dominant groups, by definition, set the parameters within which the subordinates operate. The dominant group holds the power and

> authority in society relative to the subordinates and determines how that power and authority may be acceptably used. Whether it is reflected in determining who gets the best jobs, whose history will be taught in school, or whose relationships will be validated by society, the dominant group has the greatest influence in determining the structure of society (Tatum 1999, p. 23).

Other researchers (Tinto 1987; 1978; Bean & Metzner 1985) have revealed other effects of institutional racism on the achievement of African-American students. For example, in building retention programs community colleges may not realize the services they are providing are not relevant to the needs of African-American students. Or, some instructors might not have the educational backgrounds and skills to integrate multicultural content and perspectives into their teaching. So many African Americans "experience feelings of loneliness and isolation" (Richardson & Bender 1987, p.62) on college campuses. In a paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Boston, Massachusetts in 1990, Lomotey examined some selected aspects of the culture of Oberlin College, which produce high retention rates among African-Americans students. The participants in this study were eight (8) students, 11faculty, 6 staff, and 6 administrators for a total of 31. Interviews were conducted separately with different participants but some of the questions were similar across groups.

The study concluded three things accounted for high retention rates among African-American students at Oberlin College. These were (1) The Afrikan Heritage House (2) an African-Student organization, the ABUSUA, and (3) the Black Studies Department. Each of these entities provides support, cultural enrichment, status and political advantage. Lomotey's research supports claims made by other researchers that African-American students can feel uncomfortable, lonely, and isolated in predominately white colleges. He stated, "These students feel lonely in classes where they are often the only African American; they feel that the largely white male faculty members and administrators are inhospitable and insensitive...to their unique cultural experience"(Lomotey 1990, p.1). Many times these students are unsure of the source of their feelings, not understanding what institutional racism is and how it can affect their higher educational experiences. Wilds and Wilson (1998) noted that, "Research has consistently shown that students of color who understand racism and are prepared for it and deal with it perform better academically and are more likely to adjust to predominately white campuses than those who are not prepared to do so" (p. 54). If the campus fosters this kind of feeling among African-American students, then it may be difficult for students to maintain a positive self-concept, perform well academically, and continue to persist in attendance.

In order for institutions to break down cultural barriers, they must examine the power structures to see how they assist some students and not others. Failure to do so increases the dropout rates for African American students. Some students drop out for

personal reasons, but many drop out because the institution does not always understand their cultural experiences and adjustment problems. Additional student-related variables leading to high drop out rates are lack of academic and social integration, and the issues of power faced in the classroom. The literature on institutional racism gives a better understanding of why the retention of African-American students in institutions of higher education historically has been a problem. Despite their poor preparation and socioeconomic backgrounds, many African-Americans do persist. Studying their persistent strategies (as this study does) can provide valuable insights and instructions that will benefit present and future students.

Persistence of African-American Students in Higher Education

The negative portrayals of African-American students, which stem from the deficit syndrome analyses (Banks, 1995), and the blatant and subtle forms of racism they face, are reasons why it is important to examine how these students, especially women, persist in different educational spheres. Wilds and Wilson (1998) suggested that non-traditional students must learn to "work" the system in order to succeed. According to them, "The ability to do so is critical to their success in college. Those students who have demonstrated an ability to use the system to their advantage prior to college have more success once they get there than those who have not shown that ability" (p. 57). While many male and female students from various minority groups struggle to persist in all levels of education, this study focused on African-American women in community colleges. Some researchers (Tinto, 1975; 1987; Astin, 1985; Wilds &Wilson, 1998; Bers,

1983) found that these women tend to attend college and persist at a higher rate than men. The strategies they use to accomplish these goals need to be understood.

Several studies (Clark & Crawford, 1992; Clewell, 1986; Tinto, 1982; Allen, 1981; Bean, 1980) indicate that academic and social integration has a direct effect on whether or not a student will drop out of college. Clark and Crawford (1992) examined the attitudes and perceptions of the campus and institutional environment of incoming African-American first year students at Cleveland State University (CSU). The study also investigated the attrition rate of the 122 African-American students who participated. They completed a 77-item questionnaire developed at Ohio State University and adapted to fit the purpose of the study. The questions were structured to identify African-American students' needs and perceptions regarding enrollment incentive factors, institutional support factors, and perceived barriers factors.

The study concluded that once African-Americans arrive on campus, the fit between the students and the institution may determine how well they perform, and if they will stay to completion. Clark and Crawford recommended that CSU should move beyond generalizations to specifics in regards to the impact racism has on its campus life, and develop ways to manipulate the environment to better facilitate African-American students' adjustment on campus. They also suggested that more and qualitatively different interactions need to occur between the students and the institution. Students want to feel they belong to the institution and that the institution wants them to be there.

Astin (1975, 1985) proposed that social support from the institution can be an important factor in student retention. In his book, Preventing Students from Dropping Out, (1975), he identified several ways to help students stay in college. These were grouped according to (1) decision-makers who have an interest in the dropout problem and who are in a position to choose particular courses of action to improve students' chances of completing college; (2) institutional administrators, educational planners, and policy-makers at the state and national level; and (3) students and guidance counselors. Astin also agreed that institutional involvement and academic fit are key factors to persistence. In other words, "a student's tendency to drop out of college is inversely related to the degree of direct involvement in the academic and social life of the institution" (Astin 1975, pp. 175-176).

Tinto (1975, 1987,1993) analyzed attrition patterns among students in colleges and universities. He discussed ways in which perceptions of the institution directly relate to persistence. Students who do not feel integrated into the organization will more likely leave college and pursue other activities. Tinto also identified actions institutions can take to reduce attrition. These included orientation programs that provide accurate and complete information that students need to complete their college degrees; transition and support programs such as study skills; academic preparation; library and resource use workshops; early contact programs designed to connect students with other people in the institution; and counseling and advising programs that provide guidance in particular area of study.

In an attempt to determine the quality of typical college experiences, Douzenis (1996) collected data from students at four two-year colleges in West Tennessee. The Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire was administered to 478 participants. The study concluded that participation in college activities and knowledge growth are positively related. Students who are more involved in their own education, seek out role models, participate in extracurricular activities, and have clear goals and expectations for their education tend to have better persistence rates in college.

Faughn (1982) examined the relationship between students having "significant others" (defined as people in positions of authority and respect who influence individual conceptions through either interactions with the individual or by example) in their academic lives and staying in or leaving college. The study was conducted at Spring Arbor College, and involved 181 first-year students. The participants were asked to attend an evening assembly and complete the "Significant Others Battery." Instructions were given in written form and orally, and the student returned the surveys at the end of the program. The results of the study indicated that 54 percent of the students had significant others affiliated with the college while 46 percent had no significant others at the college. Forty-four students who participated in this study left Spring Arbor College during or at the end of their freshman year. Of these, 37 indicated on the survey that they had no significant others on campus. Faughn reported that when compared to persisters, non-persisters had fewer self-described "significant"' relationships with students, faculty, and staff on campus. Students who find the institution a hostile environment will be more

likely to drop out. Three major conclusions were drawn from this study. First, a strong relationship did not exist between significant others on campus and those who left the college during their freshman year. Second, those who did have significant others on the campus were more likely to stay in school. Third, the Significant Others Battery was a useful tool in identifying those students who were likely to leave college. This information was used to develop a program at Spring Arbor College geared to the reduction of attrition.

Historically, higher education institutions rarely have taken responsibility for students leaving prior to the completion of degrees. According to The Maryland Longitudinal Study (MLS) (1987) that was conducted at The University of Maryland College Park with over 700 participants, colleges are beginning to take notice, and are working towards decreasing student dropouts. The study was conducted to better understand why students leave college and to investigate some ways in which attrition can be minimized. The report focused on students who left the college and did not transfer to another college or university.

The MLS concluded that many students dropped out of college because of lack of preparedness and inability to cope with the obstacles confronting them. Other students left because of lack of resources and support needed to succeed in college. Many students who left might have stayed until graduation had they received the benefits of programs on campus and participated more in the campus life. The study determined there should be

close interactions between the needs of students and the resources the university has to offer.

Institutions can be blamed for student dropouts if they are directly related to insensitive policies, poor resources, and an unsupportive environment. This is the same position taken by The1997 Retention in Washington Community and Technical Colleges Research Report, issued by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on performance goals and indicators. This document discussed what works to retain students in the Seattle Community and Technical College District. It indicated that while some students leave college because of financial and personal reasons, others leave because the institution does not fit their educational needs, or students cannot make the cultural transition "from not being a student to being a full member of a community college" (p.2). Colleges that understand this realization tend to satisfy the needs of a larger number of students.

Research indicates that institutions are beginning to recognize that African-American and white students come from different backgrounds, ideologies, and perspectives; and have different perceptions of success and failure. Lang (1988) contended that, "When institutions begin to recognize these differences and begin to deal with them constructively, then and only then will they be able to measure real success in solving the black student retention problems" (p. 35).

Supportive and Nonsupportive Networks

Networking, defined as " the informal sharing of information and services among individuals or groups linked by a common interest"(Webster's College dictionary, 1991,

p. 908), may contribute to students' college persistence in several ways. Such networking can be covert and overt, informal and formal. Traditionally, students tend to interact and network with those who are like themselves or have the same interests. Feagin and Sikes (1995) used "subtle discrimination" to explain the tendency of students to relate to others similar to themselves. They stated that, "There is an unconscious failure to extend to a minority the same recognition of humanity, and hence the same sympathy and care, given as a matter of course to one's own group" (p.92). African-American students who enter college for the first time and are not knowledgeable about how to navigate the system might seek out someone who, like them, lacks knowledge of the institution. Together these students move determine how to manage it together as they form strong bonds. They combine each other's strengths and weaknesses and use that knowledge to navigate through the system. This is done largely by trial and error instead of informed decision-making. As a result they are less likely to reach out to those who may be different but have a better understanding of the system.

In her (1999) writings, Tatum discussed William Cross' (1991) theory of racial identity development. According to Cross, once African Americans exit the immersion/emerison stage – "characterized by a strong desire to surround oneself with symbols of one's racial identity, and actively seek out opportunities to learn about one's own history and culture with the support of same-race peers" (p.76), they move into the internalization stage which is characterized by a sense of security about one's racial identity. He further noted, "Often the person at this stage is willing to establish

meaningful relationships across group boundaries with others, including whites, who are respectful of this new definition" (p.76). Butler (1993) stated, "Kinship networks, for example, are of primary importance to people of color for cultural reasons and for survival" (p.153). Having one or possibly several individuals who understand and affirm the ideologies, perspectives, and perceptions of success and failure that African-American students face can be crucial in negotiating educational systems. Students rely on such support to increase their chances of being successful.

African-American Women Students in Higher Education

Bers (1983) discussed the role of women in community colleges in both theory and practice. She noted that community colleges can be a welcoming place for women who have particular needs and concerns. These include being better students than males, being older when they return to school, experiencing mid-life transitions, and experiencing stress and anxiety resulting from role conflicts and responsibilities. Because of open access and enrollment, women who are unsure about their commitments and capabilities can enroll part-time without being inundated with admission requirements, or with the worry of test scores and competition for limited spaces for acceptance. According to Bers, women tend to take college more seriously, work harder at degree attainment, and finish college even if they have to drop in and out. She added, women are more likely to be part-time students because of family obligations. Many African-American women head single-parent households, which means they must work to support the family and, therefore, have to attend college part time. Bers also suggested that, "women returning to

college after an extended absence are more likely to be nervous and experience stress and anxiety as they attempt to balance school, work, and home responsibilities" (p.9). This stress is compounded by doubts about their ability to compete with younger students and to keep up with schoolwork. Many women face many insecurities when attending community college for the first time or returning after an extended absence. Bers' work is one of the few analyses that deal specifically with African-American women in community colleges.

Three issues were of primary concern to Mayo and Christenfeld (1999) in their examination of gender, race and performance expectations of college students. One was the pattern of having low performance expectations for oneself but high expectations of others. They wondered if this was a response to being female, or a product of not being in the dominant group. The second issue was the implications of being a woman and a minority. The third point of analysis was whether patterns of self-efficacy are different depending on whether people are estimating how they are about to do a task or evaluating how well they did on a completed task.

The study was conducted in two large classes at a major California university. A total of 150 students participated and they were divided into two racial categories. The first was self-reported affirmative action minority racial categories of Latino, African-American, Filipino, and Native American. The second was non-affirmative action participants of whites and Asian Americans. The gender representation included 103 females and 47 males. All the students were given surveys. Half of the students were

given packets containing reading comprehension tasks while the others were given a creativity task. They also were asked to make performance predications. Half were given the performance predictions at the beginning to anticipate how well they would do while the others were asked how well they thought they did on the tasks. The experiment was conducted during two class periods in a standardized aptitude test format.

The results of the study indicated that women tended to have low performance expectations for themselves but not for women in general. Minority women expected that they would perform significantly worse than the average undergraduate. These low expectations were to be especially pronounced when requirements are ambiguous, tasks are competitive, and social comparison is salient. The women are facing a new atmosphere and may feel that higher education may be overwhelming. The researchers suggested that institutions have an obligation to promote the capability of all racial groups by using all-inclusive curricula with content and teaching strategies appropriate to the value orientations and style differences of underrepresented students. This approach should be used instead of merely training minorities to adapt to the ways of the academy. The discussion of these characteristics is paramount to the study, because they show the feelings of women in community colleges.

History of African-American Women in Higher Education

Most of the information available about females in community colleges refers to women in general. The focus of this study is African-American women in particular.

Many women of all races and ethnicities have problems, but African-American women tend to have even more race-related issues to deal with while attending community college. They must deal with a variety of forces related to class, gender, and race. Furthermore, juggling full-time and part-time jobs along with the multiplicity of family roles and an economically uncertain lifestyle is not uncommon. Nor is it unusual for most African-American women to take longer than two years to complete a two-year program.

If community colleges are to increase the number of African-American women graduates, the history of these women must be examined. An examination would provide insight and understanding of their struggles and successes. African-American women's voices are not heard, yet they have important and potentially insightful stories to tell. While many of them have succeeded in community colleges, undergraduate and graduate schools, a trend common to women prevails among them. That is, the higher the level of education, the lower the number of degrees attained. Wilds and Wilson (1998) reported that of 42,415 doctorate degrees awarded in 1996 only 780 were conferred on African-American women. Nevertheless, many African-American women persist in higher education despite these tremendous odds. To find the answers to why this happens, the history of African-American women in community colleges should be examined.

African Americans have struggled for education since their first arrival in the United States. In her discussion of the "Cult of true womanhood" on the education of black women, Perkins (1983) compared the primary purposes and functions of educating African-American and white women in the 19th century. For white women education was

a way for them to sharpen their home-making skills, which reinforced the role of wife and mother, and the search for a potential mate. For African-American women, educations was used to uplift the race, and most were educated as teachers. They often never married, and were expected to be self-sacrificing and dutiful.

By the early 19th century white women were regarded as the "true woman," one that portrayed innocence, modesty, piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Perkins 1983, p.18). The goal of their education was to produce this "ideal woman." During this same time, African Americans viewed education as a means for economic, educational, and social improvement for their race. After the Civil War schools were available to women so that they could become teachers of lower grades, while men were prepared for college (Perkins, 1983). According to Perkins (1983),"By 1890 there were over 25,000 black teachers, half of whom were women. By 1899, 28,500 black teachers were employed in the nation" (p. 23). During this time men outnumbered women in higher education. Black women were almost exclusively trained as teachers, while men were becoming ministers, lawyers, and doctors (Perkins, 1983).

As early as 1933 Lucy Diggs Slowe, the first African-American woman dean at Howard University, wrote about the lack of opportunity for college educated women to get leadership training in black colleges. She noted limited career options available to women. She defended women's right to pursue higher education, and argued that their lack of leadership and decision-making training in higher education reflected the lack of understanding of their special needs. She was a visionary who recognized that African-

American women have special needs that should not disqualify them from succeeding in many different areas.

African-American women have always had to struggle to overcome tremendous obstacles in educational institutions and society. Gregory (1995) stated, "The history of black women in the United States can best be described as a struggle for survival, identity, and to protect and support their families" (p.3). In view of this history, African-American women have progressed in higher education to a great degree. According to Nettles (1997), African-American women received 60 percent more associate degrees and 55.4 percent more bachelor's degrees in 1994 than in 1976. As access to college opportunities improved the numbers of degrees received improved. These statistics may be indicators of the educational desires and persistence of African-American women. Allen (1992) stated, "Recently, the enrollment of women generally- and black women in particular- in post-secondary institutions has risen dramatically"(p.30). He also noted that while this may seem to give great credit to women, the reality is that the numbers are higher simply because fewer men are enrolling in higher education.

Traditionally, the education of black women has been designed to serve multiple purposes. Among these were preparations for teaching the next generation leadership, and to advance the struggle for equality (Gregory, 1995). Howard-Vital, (1989), in her study of African-American women in higher education struggling to gain identity, reported that there is very little research indicating the impact of college on black women. That which does exist concluded, "women in higher education are isolated, under utilized, and often

demoralized" (p. 184). In this same article Howard-Vital suggested the "need for a continuous generation of paradigms, empirical testing of paradigms, and an examination of existing paradigms to determine how they illuminate, obscure, or predict experiences of African-American women in different higher education milieus. Without this intellectual activity, African-American women will become invisible, isolated, and powerless" (p.189). If this is to be prevented, community colleges should do whatever is necessary to provide African-American women with the tools needed to succeed.

Nettles (1997) also has shown that women pursue higher education at a greater rate than men. In 1983 some 2,500,000 women were enrolled in public and private community colleges across the United States. There has been a major change in community colleges due to the increasing number of institutions and ethnically diverse student enrollments. In 1994, 386,606 African-American women were enrolled in 2-year colleges, which translate to 47.5 percent compared to 223,769 or 44.5 percent African-American men (Wilds & Wilson 1995).

While Rendon and Mathews (1989) focused on all minority students in community college in their research, some of their observations are particularly true for African-American women. For example, they explained

> For minority students the community college is the most important vehicle of opportunity to attain a college based education. Access and opportunity must be observed by making systematic changes throughout the pipeline, for we cannot continue to let schools,

> community colleges and universities become academic graveyards for minority students. (P.325)

There is a pressing need for research on African-American women students in community colleges. What it takes for them to persist and why they persist could be the key to attracting more African-American women to the system and ensuring their completion of the programs they study. Hence, to understand fully African-American community college women and their survival strategies, in-depth studies can be beneficial to both individual students and educational institutions.

Summary

Research and scholarship pertinent to this study were summarized in this chapter. One of the points derived from this review was that African-American women attend institutions of higher learning in greater numbers than men. Prior research and scholarship also indicated that an academic and social fit must be in place for African-American students to be successful in post secondary education. The other issues discussed included institutional racism, persistence of African-American students in higher education, supportive and non-supportive networks, African-American female students in higher education, and the history of African-American women in higher education. The research methodology used in this study is presented in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Research suggested that African-American students are most successful in community colleges that allow them to integrate socially and academically into the institution. Some of these studies were based on student self-reported observations and questionnaires. Other studies were more theoretical and argued that assimilation helps African Americans persist. This study described the experiences of persistent African-American women in community colleges based on their own self-perceptions. Qualitative methods were used to collect the data since they were compatible with the goal of the research study which was "to better understand human behavior and experience" (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 49).

Research Design

Interviews were used to uncover some of the kinds of strategies that African-American women used to survive in community college, and the context of those strategies. The interviews helped discover the multi-dimensional aspects of the women's educational situations. These included academic situations, social situations, religion and religious activities, employment, friends in and out of school, and family. As Mishler (1991, p. 2) suggested, it is important to " rely on context to understand the behavior and speech of others and to ensure that our own behavior is understood, implicitly grounding

our interpretations of motives and intentions in context" (Mishler 1991, p.2). Very few, if any, written descriptions of African-American community college women are available.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted with one full-time African-American student who attended another community college in the same city where the study took place. The length of the interview was thirty minutes. The interview protocol questions were clear and the student did not ask for any clarification of the details. However, answers that were given were very short, without much explanation. Consequently, not very much substantive information was derived from the interview. The student seemed uncomfortable and did not have much to say regarding her success.

As a result of the pilot study new questions were generated in order to make the interview process more dynamic and provocative. Those questions were: (1.) What are your survival strategies? (2.) As an African-American woman what tools do you use to be successful? (3.) What advice would you give other women in regards to persistence? (4.) How do you feel about your community college experience? Other questions and responses that arose during the interviews with the actual participants in the study were recorded and analyzed as well. The results of the pilot study showed that there was a need to think ahead as the interview was taking place in order to generate fluid answers from the students. Prompts and probes were used effectively to assist the students to think

deeper, provide more specific answers to the questions, and to offer richer explanations or elaborations of the ideas shared.

Selecting Participants

The African-American women who participated in this study were students at a community college in Seattle, Washington. A formal letter was written to the President of the college and the Dean of Enrollment Services to request the names of African-American women who are full-time students (nine hours or more) and had completed four or more quarters. Two or three African-American women who have successfully completed programs at Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) also were interviewed to explore their perceptions as successful students.

A demographic summary of the 10 participants who were involved with the study is presented in Table 1. Four of the participants were mothers but only two were married. Eight of the women were single. Six of the women were working full or part time, one was a homemaker, two were unable to work due to a medical condition and one was seeking employment. Six were thirty or older and four were in their mid-twenties. Three of the participants completed their Associate of Arts degree. Eight of the participants were in the academic transfer program, one participant was in the Apparel Design Program and one was in the Interpreter Training Program.

A short-term relationship was developed with the African-American community college women through initial contact with a letter detailing the study and requesting their

participation. (See appendix – for sample letter) Follow-up telephone calls were made to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place to conduct the interview, and to make short informal introductions prior to the interview. These techniques follow the advice of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) about conducting portraiture research. The suggested that, "In developing relationships, the portraitist searches for what is good, for what works, for what is of value-looking for strength, resilience, and creativity in the people, cultures, and institutions she is documenting" (p. 158).

Table 1.

Demographics of Participants

Name	Mother	Single	Working	30+	Degree Completed	Academic Transfer
Divinity	✓	✓		✓		✓
Heather	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Carlisia		✓			✓	
Shami		✓	✓			✓
Melissa	✓					✓
Kim		✓	✓	✓		✓
Andrea		✓	✓			✓
Jomme		✓		✓	✓	✓
Lisa		✓	✓	✓		✓
Babette	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Before any data were collected, the researcher established rapport with the women, discussed with them the structure and boundaries of the relationship, and explained the

purposes of the study. This was necessary because "reciprocity between the portraitist and the actor is more likely to occur when the structure, boundaries, and commitments of the relationship are made explicit from the beginning" (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997, p.155).

Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 African-American women who have persisted at SCCC. The number of women interviewed was changed from 15-20 to 10 for two reasons. First, 13 women initially responded to the letter requesting participation in the study. Three of these did not respond to follow-up requests for an interview. Thus, the remaining 10 women were interviewed. Second, 10 participants is a reasonable number for the research methodology of portraiture. Smaller numbers allowed for greater depth of analysis of the issue of the study, even though the findings generated cannot generalize to a larger population similar to the research sample. This is a recognizable limitation of the study but is still acceptable to qualitative research conventions. Findings from this kind of research are case examples of theoretical principles, and can validate, refine, or even generate new theories.

Interviewing was an effective method for this study because, as Seidman (1991) explained,

> it provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth

> interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. (P.4)

In the interviews different persistence-related topics, issues, and strategies were explored, such as how the women interpret certain situations, where they get their information, who they consulted when they made decisions, how they negotiated home life and school life, what they think the role of culture is in their lives, how they functioned in the classrooms, and if they participated in social activities in the institution. The complete interview protocol is presented in Appendix B. The interviews provided "rich data-filled words that reveal the respondent's perspectives" (Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p.97) about how they negotiate their academic and social lives.

Opened-ended questions and semi-structured interview procedures were used to collect data. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) noted, open-ended questions will "allow the subjects to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by prearranged questions" (p. 3). Because of the depth of information needed, one interview of 1 hour in length was conducted, using adaptations of Seidman's (1991) phenomenological approach. The first part of the interviews "put the participant's experience in context" (Seidman 1991, p.11) through questions that focus on educational experiences prior to coming to the community college. By focusing on how they survived their earlier educational experiences, how their social and academic lives were intertwined were revealed. The second portion of the interviews concentrated on "the concrete details

of the participant's present experience" (Seidman, 1991, p.12) in the community college. Specifically, these conversations focused on the survival strategies of the women in the community college. The questions explored how the women functioned academically and socially within the college. The final part of the interview consisted of the women reflecting on the meaning of their college experiences. Consistent with Seidman's (1991) interview model, the intent of these questions was to reveal "the intellectual and emotional connections between the participant's work and life" (p.12).

Data Analysis

Portraitures of persistence were constructed based on the participants' survival strategies. Portraiture is "a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and the subtlety of human experience and organizational life" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis 1997, p.xv).

Once the data collection began a participant was interviewed every other day, with the intervening day devoted to reflecting on each interview, transcribing, and initial coding of the data. This procedure followed the portraiture model because "with each stage of data collection, at the close of each day, the portraitist gathers, scrutinizes, and organizes the data, and tries to make sense of what she has witnessed" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997 p. 187). From these daily codings general themes emerged. Early identification of themes allowed the researcher to become more focused

and discerning in recognizing patterns in the data, and being more thorough in subsequent interviewing.

Once the interviews were completed, the audiotapes were transcribed by hand into separate notebooks that represented the major research questions. These transcriptions were then examined for emerging themes or categories of survival strategies. Each category of the strategies was color-coded. For example, purple represented spirituality, black was employment, blue was institutional climate, and green was self-responsibility. The transcriptions were then re-read to classify key ideas and explanations provided by the participants according to each of the identified survival strategies.

The five strategies recommended by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) were used to construct the portraitures of persistence and survival in community college for African-American women. These were repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional and cultural rituals, revealing patterns and triangulation. These strategies were important in identifying themes that were used to build the structure for the portraits. This was the framework for the portraits. Each of these strategies is explained and an example is given to illustrate them.

Repetitive refrains are statements, observations, and findings that are mentioned over and over by several individuals. An example of a repetitive refrain can be found in responses Delpit (1995) received to an article she wrote on "Skills and Other Dilemmas of a Progressive Black Educator." She explained:

I received numerous calls and letters from teachers, professors, and even state school personnel from around the country, both black and white. All of the white respondents, except one, have wished to talk more about the question of skills versus process approaches- to support or reject what they perceive to be my position. On the other hand, *all* of the nonwhite respondents have spoken passionately on being left out of the dialogue about how best to educate children of color (p.23).

A resonant metaphor is the frequent use of implied comparisons, symbols, and figurative language. Examples of resonant metaphors could be statements such as "I feel like a fish out of water," "I feel like a motherless child," or "For every one step I take forward, I fall two steps behind." The women in this study might use metaphors to explain some of the feelings they have and how they function regarding their survival in community college.

Themes might emerge from institutional and cultural rituals, "that punctuate the life of a community or institution" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis 1997 p.201). The participants also might have some institutional or cultural rituals that help them to survive in community college. An example of an institutional ritual is the use of the tutoring center or asking professors for extra help. An example of cultural rituals might be prayer, chanting, or participation in a group or club at the community college that represents a certain culture.

Revealing patterns is still another way that themes emerge; these scattered pieces of information may or may not be immediately recognized as survival strategies by the women telling the story. It is the function of the researcher to make these connections. The key to revealing patterns is to locate the structures in the women's stories. The patterns "do not always develop out of convergence; they must also be discerned through reflecting on the dissonant strains, through discovering the order of chaos, through finding the coherence in what often seems inchoate and scattered to the actors in the setting" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis 1997, p.214).

Triangulation occurred through multiple interviews. The women were interviewed individually. These interviews were transcribed and preliminary analyses of them were conducted, focus groups of three were conducted using some of the same questions from the individual interviews and new questions that emerged from the data. Focus groups allowed the participants to listen to others, and triggered more extensive responses because "emergent themes arise out of this layering of data, when different lenses frame similar findings" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, p.204).

The data that derived from these analyses (e.g. repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional and cultural rituals, revealing patterns and triangulation) was used to construct the portraitures of survival strategies. The first dimension was the conception of the story, or the "overarching story" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997 p. 247), which usually "grows out of the dominance of an emergent theme" (p.248). It is likely that one or two dominant themes emerged from the interviews. These constituted

the framework for the portraiture. These themes shaped the narrative, and gave focus and control to the "development of a situation, the characters, theme, plot, style, and technique, so that in the end they cohere, as in a single charged image" (p. 248).

The second dimension of the portrait was the structure. Structure of the portraits gave frame, stability, and organization to the themes. The subheadings used throughout the portrait provided the structure. As the overarching narrative took shape from the conception, it was the themes that began to build the story. Each theme was turned into a subheading of each portrait. The structure also lent consistency and balance to the portrait. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

The next dimension was the form. The form of the portraits provided the substance, the emotion, and the intellect of the women. The form was "expressed in stories, examples, illustrations, illusions, ironies [and] gives life and movement to the narrative, providing complexity, subtlety, and nuance to the text, and offering the reader opportunities for feeling identified and drawn into the piece" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis 1997, p. 254). The form was flowing and fluid, it gave life to the narrative.

Coherence was the final component to the portraits. This was the systematic and logical order of the narrative. The patterns were clearly established, and the narratives were told in the order of beginning, middle, and end with an emphasis on the emerging theme. Coherence in the narrative also had "a clear and consistent voice and perspective" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p.256). The narrative must be coherent

and in sequential order with the events unfolding through "repetitions of images, patterns and refrains" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p.256). Unity was established along with the balance of information and emotion. The narration was written to "inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and the heart" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p.243).

Different methods were used in analyzing the data to answer the research questions and construct the desired portraitures. The data were be transcribed and the text was reviewed and analyzed to reconfigure it according to the questions. The sketches were presented and reconfigured to create symbolic portraitures. The composite portraitures of the phenomena of interest in the study of survival strategies were the focus of analysis not the individual women's per se.

Summary

The research methodology used in this study was presented in this chapter. The methodology included the research design, the pilot study, and selection of the participants, data collection methods, and data analysis.

The findings that derived from this study are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will analyze the data collected for the study. The analysis will be presented in the order of survival strategies that were most important to least important to the participants. They are as follows: family, responsibility of self for success, spirituality, institutional climate, employment, finances, and encouragement of friends/others. The order was determined by the frequency of the strategy in the transcriptions.

Family

Almost all of the women in this study spoke of family as aiding in their college persistence. Sometimes the credit was given to both parents, one-parent, siblings, other adult family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins, and even to their own children. Mothers specifically played a prominent role. However, the particular nature of this role varied across the participants. Two of the women's mothers are teachers. One of them, Shami, explained, "I had a lot of support. My mom's a teacher. There was a lot of pressure from my mom, and dad also, to do the best I could so I guess you could call it support too but it came out fine in the end." Divinity, also the daughter of a teacher, shared the support she received from her mother somewhat differently. Yet it was very strong. She said, "My [mom] was a teacher. She didn't allow any 'laziness' in her house. She always had us doing something."

Other participants received encouragement from their mothers to get an education, but in less directive ways. For example, Carlisia recalled, "My mom always encouraged me to do what I want to do to get an education." Although similar to Carlisia, Andrea explained in greater detail about the advice and support she received from her mother:

> My mom always talked to me about making sure that I had enough education to be independent where I wouldn't have to be dependent on people for my survival. She always used her and my dad as an example saying that cause my mom and dad are middle class but they are working middle class. They work to stay there and she was sayin' she didn't want me to have to struggle and work as hard to be what they are and how it's every parents' dream that their child to supercede them in success. So she kinda just instilled that in me to work hard.

Lisa's mother taught her to be independent and self-reliant especially in learning situations. This socialization has helped her to succeed in community college. Lisa explained her mother's influence as follows:

> Well, if I asked my mother what something meant she would always say 'go look it up.' She always had a bunch of dictionaries and encyclopedias around. So it got to the point where I wouldn't ask her anything.

> I'd just go look it up in the encyclopedias. Sometimes I'd just pick out a volume and start reading at random. If I didn't have anything to do I'd just pick out something and I'd start reading or I'd go to look up one thing and I'd get distracted by something else and I'd read that. They still have those encyclopedias too.

Jomme credited her mother for providing high motivation and aspirations for success. She recalled that

> My mother had always told us we could do anything we wanted to do in life. She really pushed us to do the best and be the best at whatever we choose to do whatever it was. And has always been really supportive in whatever it was that we chose to do, so she's also the one that said life isn't fair so don't expect it to be, you can't roll over and play dead if things don't go your way.

In addition to their direct influences some of the participants spoke about learning indirectly from the experiences of their mothers. Melissa stated, "My mom, my mom actually finished [college] before I did. As soon as I left to go to college-I think the year after that-she went back to school and she got her degree in criminal justice. So I think my mom is just my biggest inspiration. She really is." Lisa's mother went to college but did not graduate. She feels an obligation to her mother to complete her education because "I

guess you can say I'm the first in my family to finish college since I have no brothers or sisters. I'm the only one in my family." Fear of wasting her mother's money kept Carlisia in community college. She reported, "I think it was the fear of my mother cause she was payin' for it and I felt like if I didn't finish I was gonna be in big trouble. So basically I believe I went to school the first time for my mother I didn't go for myself."

Four of the participants mentioned the influence of fathers. Jomme listened to her father when she was deciding on a major area of study. She remembered,

> I've always been interested in Psychology. But when I was eighteen and getting ready to go to college I keep hearing from my father, 'you got to do something where you can make some money and you can't make money doing that.' So it kind of got pushed to the side and I did what I was told.

Andrea's father paid her tuition for two quarters. When she received her grades she had broken their agreement of keeping a "B" average. Consequently, her father told her she would have to pay her own fees. Lisa explained further that her father "just went through high school," and she will be the first family member to finish college. Fulfilling this role is a strong motivation for her persistence.

Melissa and Carlisia also were positively influenced by their fathers. Both fathers had little education, yet they were self-employed in successful businesses. Melissa stated, "My dad definitely influenced me. Just to see him without an education build his own

self-employed [business] lets me know I can pretty much do whatever I want." Carlisia shared a similar point of view. She said, "[my dad] started his own business. He didn't have a college education but was still about to make it."

Jomme was not so fortunate as Melissa and Carlisia. She did not receive positive influences or support from the male members of her family. She recalled

> I have a father and a brother who are well off, but that's not who is supporting me in this. They're giving me, 'oh that's nice' or 'it's about time' kinda thing. [They are] not saying 'you're smart' and and 'I'm glad you're doing this' and 'how can I help?' None of that.

Another strong college persistence motivation for the participants was their own children. Not all of the women have children, but those who do indicate a strong desire to be role models for the children and show them the importance of education. Three of the women explained these feelings. Divinity explained that her three sons "keep the motivation going by allowing me to be their role model due to the fact that I am a single parent. What I'm trying to show them is, yes your mom is disabled. Yes, she is Black in America, but she is still trying to succeed in life." Heather said having a child "definitely made me more mature and not so self-centered. I want to be able to be a mom and to give her [daughter] as much as possible of myself, and the only way I could do that is to go back to school and get educated in what I want to do." On a more pensive note, she added,

"just to see her makes me want to try – harder. You know to have better for the both of us." Melissa's children are her motivation to persevere. She said, "they keep me going. Just looking at them motivates me. I know that I have to keep going. I have to still continue to get goals and figure out a plan whatever it is to reach those goals." Melissa stays in college because if her children want to go to college when they get older it will be difficult for her to encourage them if she has not done so herself. To prevent this creditability problem she declared, "I feel like I need to be an example, set the example. Markel may not want to go to college. That may not be her thing. College is not for everybody Skylar might not either. But at least I'll have set an example for them to follow."

Babette became a mother at a very young age. This cast some doubts on the future of her own education. She remembered that her family was "kind of worried about my situation; how I would make it. Education is important in my family and I think they felt I got the short end of the stick. So it was important to them for me to go to school." Babette also thought that if "being a mom and raising your children [was] your total focus. After a while you start to wonder when this is all over what's in it for me?" She feels it is important to finish college because otherwise "you don't have anything to hold over your children. They would say, who are you to tell me; you didn't finish high school.' They don't take things for granted."

Shami is the guardian of her younger sister. She is finding this a difficult adjustment to make along with managing the demands of college. Yet, the desire to set an example for her sister to emulate encourages her persistence. As she explained,

> It's really hard. She [younger sister] is in school, too, and it's a lot of work. I don't know how to explain it. It is just a lot of work, just tryin' to balance my school and tryin' to keep the grades above what I want it to be and making sure she's got food at home...so its like a task but I feel like one day I'll look back and be like I did it, I did it."

The support and role modeling provided by sisters was a third major familial source of preparation for surviving in college. Babette has five sisters who attended college and established their careers prior to getting married and having children. Her sisters were very supportive when she had her children. Babette noted that "they had that part [college] of their life over with early and it was expected. That's how things were done then." Melissa explained that her older sister was a role model, although she "wasn't the college type, but she went to beauty school and she's gone as high as she could go. Just seeing other people reach their goals has encouraged me and been a part of my life."

Therefore, the emotional, inspirational, and motivational support of their family helped the women in this study to continue their education. Comments made by Heather, Babette, Melissa and the other participants summarize the importance of this family support as a powerful strategy for persistence in their college education. Heather stated,

"my family has been very, very supportive. I couldn't have done it [college] without them at all you know from studying late at night and them watching her [daughter]." Babette thought, "it was my family's influence and that whole situation about having a child and knowing that you are expected to go to school and stuff." Andrea felt that "looking at members of my family and members of the community around me and wanting more for myself. You know, my mom and dad married young and they are successful. But just think if my mom and dad had gone to college how much farther they could be now and not wantin' to have to struggle to the same extent they had too."

Shami's parents are what make her push through when she wants to quit. "I think of my parents, my parents are really like this hope in me I can't just disappoint them…if it wasn't for my parents saying you gotta come out with something I probably wouldn't be in school."

Responsibility of Self for Success

Most of the participants in this study claimed personal responsibility for their college success. They identified that self-determination, motivation and perseverance as key factors in their survival. Some considered the community college as a foundation for working towards higher goals and aspirations. Many of the women stated that staying focused, asking for help, and involvement in extra curricular activities were also keys to their success. Others survived community college because they wanted to avoid having to

struggle through life, and they were willing to work hard to overcome obstacles in order to be successful.

Self Determination and Motivation

Divinity had personal determination. She did not have much support from others yet she was determined that she was going to succeed on her own. When asked about what helped her succeed in college she stated, "My own drive, there was no one really there to be positive; it was my own drive. I decided I had to keep going." Heather felt the same way. She used examples from her work experience to discuss her personal drive to succeed. She said, "I've always had the mindset of anything I want to do I'm gonna succeed at it. It doesn't matter what it is, from being in sales, to being an assistant, to having a goal a year later of being a manager and doing it. Heather used the same determination she applied at work when she returned to school. She is of the mindset that "I started something so I have to finish it. Now too, even though there have been times when I wanted to quit."

Carlisia attended Seattle Central Community College at two separate times in her life. The first time was immediately after graduation from high school. She went to community college then because she was expected to go to college, but did not take the experience seriously. She reflected,

> I made it through but I just kinda made it through, just stumbling through. I didn't really have any incentive. I

> just felt like I needed to finish because I started. I mean I didn't give it my all. I was like I gotta get this. I wasn't worried about my grades. I was just trying to get through the program, to get the degree and then figure out what I wanted to do from there.

The second time Carlisia attended community college because she had the personal desire to do so. She decided on a program of study (apparel design) and set about the business of completing it successfully. This time, Carlisia said college was "more self-motivating. I had people behind me motivating me but it was really something I felt in my heart I really wanted to do. So it meant more to me the second time than it did the first time."

Melissa had "motivation from within" to succeed. She discussed her success in taking an on-line course for the first time. Melissa explained how she learns better in an environment with other people, and how the challenge of an on-line course affected her. She worked hard and received a 4.0 grade in the class. She feels she succeed because of the expectations she held for herself. Melissa told herself that "you gotta' do this; this is serious. It's not like when you went to UT in '90. This is serious business; you gotta finish your education. You gotta do well if you want to get into a university down there." Holding herself responsible for succeeding was motivating for Melissa even though she recalled, that many times "I wanted to give up, I'm telling you."

Jomme returned to community college after an illness that would not allow her to work. She uses "sheer will and determination" to prevail in community college. This is important to her self-image because as she explained,

> it's something I want to do and it also gives me a sense of worth, especially if you were raised middle class. Being on welfare or collecting money from the state and not working is not something that we do. So I found myself at 38 years old, or whatever it was, not having a job, and not being able to support myself. It did a job on my self-esteem and my identity. So going to school has kind of given that back to me, and I don't feel quite so worthless.

Kim knows what self-determination is all about. She has had the type of life that makes her grateful for a second chance. The strategies she used to stay in college were to "stay motivated, stay prayin', stay workin', stay goin' to school just [have the] will and desire to be somethin' I know I can be." Babette echoed the same sentiments. Kim said succeeding in college is "up to you. I felt more in control of my destiny. It was up to me. I felt my destiny was up to me." Heather agreed with Kim, declaring:

> I feel right now in life I'm just starting all over again. I feel I'm just coming out of the blocks. I've got a new fresh start all over again and maybe it's cause I'm doing

what I want to do, what my heart really desires to do.
I look at the past as a growing and learning experience.
Everything that I've done in the past has definitely
helped me get to the point where I'm at now.

Goal-Setting

Each of the participants has goals and aspirations to be a better person. While their specific goals and aspirations vary, each one had a commitment to achieving a higher education. Carlisia remembered when she really felt good about going to school. She participated in two fashion shows that boosted her confidence. They made her "feel like I can do this, [I am] on the right path and that [I am] going in the right direction." Carlisia noted that the first time she was in college did not mean as much to her as the second time. She explained that when she returned she began to realize that college was important and there were goals that needed to be met. Carlisia recalled, "I really knew what I wanted to do. I had my goals set. I was really determined to get good grades, and really succeed in the program."

Two of the participants emphasized the importance of clarifying goals and really knowing what you want to do prior to entering higher education. Melissa suggested, "it might be hard now but it will be even harder later if you don't get your education." To further emphasize this point she recommended advising other students to "take off a semester, go out there in the real world, and get a job without an education. You'll be right back here. Finish your education because it's not easy

without it." Carlisia agreed with Melissa. She would "tell someone if they are really serious about going to school to get a job and work for a while. [Or] just really take the time to really search yourself and see if there is something you really wanna do and then if you do, just go for it."

Kim shared the same feelings about clarifying goals as a basis for college success. However, she provided a somewhat different explanation. She suggested, "just think about it. If you're just working five years from now that is five years you could have been in school." Andrea, Lisa and Melissa all used the same words in speaking about having a goal in mind. Andrea said, " you have to set your goal and know exactly what you wanna do." Melissa agreed, as she spoke more personally, saying "I set all my goals in high school so I could achieve the goal of graduating from college." Lisa used goal setting as a way to keep moving through the community college. She reflected how, "Just remembering my ultimate goal" motivates her to persist with going to college.

Carlisia equated self-responsibility for success in community college with commitment and concentration. In reflecting on her progress in her academic program she stated, "If nothing else came out of this it definitely taught me how to be focused, how to really commit to something fully. This program - just from so much time you had to spend there, just having to be there - I think it really showed me that I could be committed to things I truly believe in." Staying focused on tasks even when other things had to be sacrificed reinforced this commitment. As Carlisia explained,

> I had to just tell people from the very beginning (my family, my friends) I'm about to get in this program. It's really intensive and I just need you guys to... just [understand]. I asked for people's support and I explained to them you may not see me a lot but I'm here. Call and check on me.

Building a Foundation

A good foundation for education is another survival strategy the participants in this study used as they moved through community college experiences. They recognized that in order for them to go on to the university they must have a good academic foundation. In anticipating this advancement Shami stated, "I think it means having a good basis for when I go to the university. I think I'll have a pretty good start." Andrea used the word "bridge" when describing the community college foundation. She felt that, without the community college, "if I had to go straight into the university level again with everything else I have going on it would probably wipe me out cause I know how tough it is." Kim also gave credit to the community college for establishing a foundation for more advanced education. She declared:

> Being a community college student is the first step to where I'm trying to go. So I'm proud. I love to tell people, 'I'm in Seattle Central Community College.' I know I haven't got my AA yet but when I get it I goin' straight to get my

bachelor's and after my bachelor's I'm gonna get my master's, and after my master's I gonna get my Ph.D. So I just think of it as a stepping-stone.

Two of the participants felt that their community college experience was a foundation for all they plan to achieve later on in life. They thought it would enhance their chances for better employment as well as attaining higher education degrees. These beliefs played a strong role in these African-American women's persistence in college. Some comments made by Melissa are representative of this perception of the instrumental value of education in general and community college in particular. She explained that

> Finish your education because it's not easy without it. It's even still difficult with it, but it makes it a little easier. It's not so difficult because at least you know that you did get the education so you know what other steps as to why you're not getting the job or what have you. You've at least cut out one of the things that it can't be that because, 'yes, I do qualify I do have my bachelor's degree.'

Andrea added another even more personal perspective to the same point. Reflecting on her educational progress to date she said

> Right now where I stand I think I'm in the process

of still buildin'. Everything up until now has been
like a foundation for everything that I'm gonna be.
I think that's all it can be right now, a foundation
for what's to come.

Shami spoke more philosophically about building a foundation as a way of improving her chances of succeeding in college and life beyond. She declared:

I think that life to me is just a big learning experience.
I think that I've met lots of people. I've been in two
different worlds in my life...I don't think life is about
school only...it's about learning, it's about networking
and meeting people.

Seeking Assistance

The participants took the initiative in asking for help in order to be successful in college. They used these experiences to foster a better working relationship with their professors and staff members who worked in various support roles, such as librarians, counselors, and financial aid.

Shami shared a story about asking for help on a course grade, which illustrates this initiative:

there is this one class I took and the reason he
[the professor] didn't give me the grade I wanted
was because I fell asleep in his class one day because

I worked 50 hours that week and I was really tired....

I went to him and I explained to him and he totally

understood and changed my grade for me.

This was an important step for her. Shami felt that being able "to talk to the teachers one-on-one and explain to them" was very helpful to her academic survival because "lots of times they understand what you are going through." She also revealed that in order to be a success in community college it is important to participate in class discussions even if you do not know the answer. In applying this strategy Shami said, "I never leave a class without the teacher recognizing me even if it's for talking too much. I'm gonna be like, 'you're gonna remember this face when you're walking down the hallway cause I was here.'" She feels it helps in efforts to be successful if you "leave your mark wherever you go." Jomme had the same sentiments as Shami. Her confidence in managing college was boostered by asking for help and being persistent and figuring things out.

Melissa also stressed the importance of asking for help. She feels that most of the faculty is willing to help but cannot if questions are not asked. She added, "I think knowing that somebody is in your corner and willing to help you and being able to ask for help are the biggest and best things you can do for yourself." However, Melissa, most often, did not apply her advice to herself. This is illustrated by her statement that asking for help

doesn't mean that you aren't strong. Actually it

means you are [strong] because you have the wisdom

to be able to say, 'Look, I wanna finish. Yeah, I wanna be a lawyer but I need some help in order to reach that goal, and not be ashamed of that.' That's my problem, [I think] I should be able to do this with no help. Something must be wrong with me.

Jomme did not show any ambiguity about asking for help. She contributed her clarity in this area to age. She talked about her classes and how her age played a role in her asking for help. She stated:

> There are a few classes that I've been in and there were kids, you know twenty or so, and I could see the difference between them and the adults. The adults kinda know what they wanna do. They're not afraid to ask for what they want or what they need. That was my thing. If you could do it for me then help me get this done. And they won't ask for that kind of thing, so I think my age helped a lot just in my determination.

The other women in this study tended to be more like Jomme and Melissa in regards to asking for help as a survival strategy in community college. Jomme summed up their position on seeking assistance when she declared, "we shouldn't have to [do everything]. I think so many of us get sick or something drastic has to happen before we

realize we don't have to do this alone." In comparison, Melissa was so hesitant about asking for help that even when church family members offered to help with her children she refused. She recalled that "they offered, offered, offered, and I never accepted because I felt I could do it myself. So the Lord has put people in my life to help me. I just didn't know how to accept it."

Minimizing Struggle

Three of the participants discussed fighting discrimination as a survival strategy. Two of them felt they were at a disadvantage even before starting college because of the prejudices against African-American women in U.S. society. Yet, they wanted to move forward and beyond racial stereotypes. When asked why she has returned to community college Divinity responded, "I didn't want to be a statistic. I don't want to be a young Black mother on welfare. That was a fear of mine." Andrea believed she has to work harder to garner the same respect as women of other ethnic groups, especially European Americans. She expressed these sentiments as follows:

> I already know that I have two strikes against me off the bat. I'm a woman, so I'm the weaker vessel...on top of that I'm a Black woman so I have to overcome all the stereotypes. So it's made me work harder... you're always gonna know I'm a woman, you're gonna know I'm a Black woman but I guess I'll just strive harder to break myself outta that mold.

Babette had a different perspective on the situation. She used pride to resist racism and move toward success in community college. She remembers taking a coordinated studies course where she " learned so much about African-American History that you don't get taught in high school." This experience taught her that, while it may not be easy to move through the community college system, she had to try her best because so many of her ancestors had "struggled hard to make a difference not only to themselves but also for other people, and [they] were proud people who persevered." The example they set helped her to persist in her efforts to move forward in higher education.

Two of the participants no longer wanted to struggle economically in life. They have chosen community college as a way to end this struggle. Andrea stated, "I gotta think about strugglin' not wanting to have to struggle, wantin' to be successful." She wanted to make her life easier. Heather also was "tired of struggling, tired of not having things like money." She used this as motivation in her pursuit of higher education.

"Don't give up" was a recurrent message in the participants' personal ownership of responsibility for their own college success. They gave themselves credit for persevering, and advised other African-American female college students to do likewise. For example, Kim declared, "don't give up, don't sell yourself short or cheap. If you really want it [education] then go for it. You can have it. You can do it." She was emphatic in this conviction. Andrea told herself and others to "keep pushin'. " She elaborated further,

Persevering, I mean just like pushin', just pushin', yeah. That's

> what I've been doin' the whole time, pushin' tryin' to get through. Pushin' through whatever, through bein' tired, through bein' broke, just pushin' and tryin' to go on and finishin' what you wanted to do, what you set out to do.

Like Andrea and Kim, Shami attributed her college survival to her will to "just keep on going, not give up because there is always a light at the end of the tunnel if you keep on going. People don't just work hard for nothing."

Spirituality

Spirituality was another important college survival strategy of the participants in this study. Most of them lead spiritual lives and spoke about the strength, guidance, and encouragement they received from their belief in a Supreme Being. Most of the participants were Christians but one was a practicing Muslim. They combined their appeal to spirituality with personal responsibility and family support as fundamental to their perseverance in community college.

Prayer has been the main stronghold of this spirituality for many of the participants. Divinity explained that "having a spiritual grounding and just praying and being faithful" helped her persist in college. These were necessary because "there are too many people out there who would be more than happy to be in the position I am in now than their position." Heather has managed to survive her community college experience with "nothing but prayer." She noted that she "can't believe it myself sometimes that

we're really blessed with what we have." Carlisia also spoke of using "a lotta prayer" to keep her motivated in her studies. Andrea was even more graphic in explaining the importance of prayer to her as a survival strategy. She said,

> I pray, I pray, I pray, and I pray [laugher]. I should have calluses on my knees. I just pray. Wendy is a funny teacher, cause the first day you take her class she makes it seem like it's an overwhelming, big, huge thing. And I remember I sat in her class the whole time she went over her syllabus and I just prayed, ' God I can't do this. You gotta help me through this...I mean I study but when it gets to be too much I just pray.

Kim prayed to Allah to help her through difficult times. She said, "Religion has helped me pull through a lotta things. Sometimes I didn't always have the faith that I maybe should have but in the end I think things have always worked out because I did pray about it."

Carlisia had another person to share in her spiritual experience in community college. She spoke about her first encounter with another Christian in her program. She explained that there are not very many African-American students in the program, and those who are drop out with the others soon after the program's intensity begins. She reflected, "I think I was fortunate to find someone else who I could relate to and who I

could bond with and we could use each other as emotional support and to keep each other going."

The strength derived from their belief in a Supreme Being also helped most of the participants to survive community college. Divinity stated it simply, " The Lord's strength is keeping me motivated to try to succeed in life, even though society has labeled me disabled and not being able to be the normal person, being different." Melissa spoke similarly, saying,

> 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me'
> so I already know it. [This scripture] It's saying He's not
> gonna do it for you but He's givin' you the strength to do it.
> So I know I am a child of the King I've drawn on that
> strength. He's given me strength so that means I could
> do it.

Kim is a Muslim. Her views on religion reflected the same sentiments as the other participants in regards to providing strength. Kim is very religious and feels her religion has assisted her in community college due to the fact there were times she felt like she could not or should not pursue higher education. But, "when I sat down and prayed about it. I came up with the conclusion I have a right to be here. I can do this. I can do it because Allah said I can."

Discipline in the faith is another form of strength used by two other participants. Andrea has been actively involved in the church all her life. She believes this has taught

her a kind of discipline that transfers to functioning as a student in community college. She declared:

> I think that religion, whatever your religion is, gives you a certain discipline. You can choose to follow it or not to follow it, but it gives you a certain discipline because it sets up morals and values in your life that, regardless of what you do, you can't really stray from. You stick to them anyway. So I think it sets up a type of discipline that applies throughout your life. It's like a common thread that runs through.

Two of the participants looked to God for guidance and help as they moved through higher education. Divinity stated, "I needed that divine spiritual guidance to help me get through what I am going through. Just one day at a time with the Lord's help." Carlisia knew that her Christian beliefs played a significant role in her college experience because "God was leading me into going. He showed me. He provided the ways for me to go to school."

Praise and worship gave Melissa strength and Divinity motivation. Divinity stated, "I know that I cannot breathe without praising the Lord because I know that is where my strength comes from." Melissa agreed that praise and worship are important sources of her fortitude. Divinity explained that, "I just stay in worship whenever I'm not doin' somethin' else. That keeps my spirit motivated to just keep on keepin' on." Four of the

participants had medical problems that added to their educational challenges and struggles. Divinity had Multiple Sclerosis, Melissa had carpal tunnel, Jomme had a serious medical condition that prevented her from working, and Carlisia had back problems. Each of them realized that their conditions slowed them down and made them stop, listen, and take care even as they pressed on in their efforts to gain and education. These conditions caused the women to evoke a kind of secular as well as religious spirituality as survival strategies. Carlisia noted, "That's what they say. You have to stop and listen. Cause we're so busy just doin' if you don't stop you can't hear nothin'." Melissa supported Carlisia by noting, "the Lord will get your attention. Layin' down I can hear Him real clear. Jomme commented in a similar philosophical vein, saying, "He [the Lord] was throwin' rocks at me and finally just threw that brick and said 'you know what? I'll just stop you completely."

Institutional Climate

The community college provides an environment that is a "fit" for the participants. The size of the college and the classes are two things the institution provides that help them to pursue a higher education. When comparing advantages of the community college to a four-year university Carlisia explained "I have the opportunity to be in a smaller arena…I didn't think I could function that well in a big classroom." The size of the community college encouraged Jomme to attend school. She "liked community college because it was small and more intimate." Babette used the similar words to describe her

preference for the community college. She reflected that, "[I like] the size, mostly I like intimate space."

The actions of the administrators, faculty and staff are important to the success of the participants. Some of the participants received encouragement and support directly from faculty members. Others received this support from staff, and one even from the President of the college. Carlisia felt strongly that the structure of her program and its faculty were very supportive. She spoke about the caring attitudes of her professors in helping relieve the stress of the program. She pointed out that, "the program is structured a little differently. Our professors were more apt to come up and say, 'Are you ok today?' They may notice you are a little down, or be like 'do you need a break' 'Do you need to walk around?'" Carilisa was grateful for this extra attention and support. According to Carlisia the professors who were able to do this best "went through the program so they all understand exactly what we're going through. They knew how stressed you were and what it took to make it through the program. That was definitely a blessing."

One-on-one communication with the teachers is another major aspect of college survival. Many of the participants spoke of individual interaction with instructors as something that helped them flourish. Carlisia felt that in the university the one-on-one communication with professors is not the same as it is in the community college. Shami supported Carlisia's position. She noted, "there is a lot of one-on-one communication with the teachers. The classes aren't that big so almost all the teachers know your name. For me that makes me feel like they care just a little bit if they learn my name…I'm able to go

talk to Mr. Whoever and ask for help and them being able to give out their time and help me out." Kim attended community college because of the size of the school, and because, "the environment is a little bit more friendlier and the teachers are more helpful." Melissa felt it was important to "get to know the instructors, have one-on-ones [conversations] with them, ask questions and be interested in what they are teaching." [I] ask questions after class especially if I don't understand anything."

Some instructors have invited students to maintain contact with them even after the student has exited the course. Heather shared a story of an instructor she kept in contact with to the point she feels "like he is a member of my family." Kim's summer math teacher told her that despite the fact she is no longer in the class she could come for help with other classes. This offer made Kim "feel so good" because she "can always go back to her [instructor] because she was really good at explaining a lot of stuff to me. So that's gonna' be a plus in the future and I can use her to write a letter for me. She is just a really nice lady." Kim was so impressed with this instructor's support that she hoped, the community college would "keep hiring teachers that like to teach and who are patient and who don't mind helping people succeed." Jomme attended courses where the instructors invited other professionals to teach some of the topics. She felt this instructional technique was "invaluable because you are talking to people that aren't just academics, that are actually working, so they know what they are talking about. It carries more weight. [The instructors] made it easy to pick their brains and ask questions that I needed to ask. They were encouraging, too."

Andrea was highly influenced by her instructors. Charles Jeffries and Wendy Alvin gave her new ways of thinking about her career goals. They both stretched her as far as she could go. Andrea was impressed by Wendy Alvin. She stated, " I remember Wendy Alvin calling me to the side and askin' me, 'Are you sure you wanna go into nursing school? Have you thought about medical school?' Because of these two teachers, Andrea was "just thinkin' I'll be a nurse runnin' around takin' vitals and passing out meds but now maybe I can go into psychiatric nursing, or go and be a doctor or something."

In addition to the positive reactions of the instructors the participants in this study received support and encouragement from other staff members within the community college. Carlisia received encouragement from the President of the college on more than one occasion. She remembered getting,

> A lotta encouragement which I don't think alotta
> others get from Charles Mitchell, which I thought was
> weird. I didn't expect that. He's the president of the school.
> I don't even know if he remembers this, but every time
> we ever have a showing or we are ever around his office
> showing our garments or whatever he would always make
> a point to come up to me and say 'Good job, stay encouraged.'
> I thought that was really nice.

Lisa's mentor contributed to her success in community college as well. She explained how in the following statement:

> [the] one person at the college that contributed to my success was Lois Dawson. She's retired now. She retired this year and I didn't like that much. She was the academic counselor I had…She's dealing with life on life terms. Sometimes I refuse to do that. She helped me through how long I was going to have to stay here, what courses I have to take, that sort of thing.

Several people assisted Jomme during her community college experience. She recalled, "the people in the financial aid were great; the people in the library were really helpful in terms of my research and trying to find things…when I needed research the person in the library went out of her way to help me." When Jomme had an unfortunate experience with one of her instructors the Dean of Students was supportive in helping her resolve the situation. She described this incident and the Dean's help as follows:

> I had a problem in one particular class that I thought was racial. I had a teacher that accused me of plagiarizing a speech. She had no evidence. She actually wrote on the paper 'Good speech, did you actually write it yourself?' I asked her what she meant about that and she said 'Well I know you are in college but…' And, so I ended up going to the Dean and telling her about this situation and she didn't rehire the

> woman. That made me feel that somebody
> actually listened to what I had to say and took my
> word for it. Of course she investigated.

Babette was fortunate enough to have a mentor at the community college who worked with her each day in her involvement in leadership. She felt the director of student affairs was a

> very Mother Hubbard kind of woman.
> She kind of takes you in, tell you what's going on. If
> you have questions she always has her door open;
> if she doesn't have time she'll get back to you....
> I didn't have a goal. I just wanted to learn
> and I liked learning; that part was good. It was
> Lexie that said, 'you know, you are racking up
> all these credits; you need to direct them somewhere.
> If you don't do anything but get your AA in Liberal
> Arts at least you got that.' I said, 'I can do that,'
> and that kind of started me off.

Babette also learned the patience that is required to be a team player under the tutelage and mentoring of this same faculty member.

Shami combined self-initiative and encouragement from others within the institution climate to increase her college success. She explained how this worked as follows:

> I'm actually taking a class. It's a division of the Student Leadership where they organize entertainment and music and stuff like that…I decided to join leadership because I feel like a natural born leader…My friend joined and he said 'You gotta go join' so that is how I found out about it. I actually did some interviews for the people who wanted to join leadership. They chose some students to come and talk to people [who wanted to join leadership] and you get to grade them and see if they get it [the position]or not. I did the interviews and that is how I found out more about it.

The diversity on the community college campus was another important means of survival and persistence. It provided an avenue through which students could interact with others, explore a variety of courses, feel comfortable with their age, and participate in different activities. The community college was praised for its support and the many different options it has available to students. Melissa felt the community college is "doing a really good job because they have the universities come in quite often [and] they have all the different offices you need for any type of counseling. So, I think that they are pretty well equipped to handle the community college student." She went on to say that, "it has

so many things in place. Even if you have kids, there is a daycare on site. That means a lot for a mom that might not wanna have her kid far away from her."

Shami viewed the campus diversity in a more traditional manner. The diversity provided by the college was an advantage for her because, "I get to meet a lot of new people. I love learning about people's culture and stuff like that…I'm more comfortable at school because everybody is there to learn just like me, and I get to hang out and get to know people better." Shami also appreciated the variety of classes offered at the community college. One course she enrolled in "wowed" her by offering many African-American books to read. This introduction has had a lasting effect on Shami. She said, "I only read African-American books now cause of that class." Like Shami the diversity of opportunities found on the community college campus was a benefit to Andrea and helped her persist in her studies. She remembered,

> One quarter it was pertinent I work. I was still able to keep up on my classes because I could take the video courses and the distance learning and the correspondence [courses]. They have more of a variety than other community colleges… So there is never really a quarter at Central where they're not offering something that I need. Their class schedules are pretty good.

Andrea's work schedule prevented her from participating in many of the activities offered by the community college. Yet, she felt "Central is very good about opening up things for you to come. [It has] a lot of community forums and different things like that."

Age played a pivotal role in the matriculation of the participants in community college. Two participants viewed their age as an asset to their success. Jomme offered some perceptive reasons for why this was so. She explained that "you have a different mindset [about college] when you are older and you go back. Everything is more interesting and it's not just about getting the papers done or taking the test. I think you are really interested in the subject matter. So it makes it easier to go there and want to be there." Melissa, who is 28 years old, was "glad that it's [community college] there, especially for people like me that might feel discouraged, might feel bad cause you're old and you should have finished a long time ago." Melissa is viewed as a leader by other students because of her age. She did not necessarily share their perceptions. While she is excited about learning and "finding out something new," she did not feel a part of Seattle Central because she was older. In speaking about these conflicting images Melissa explained

> The students seemed like they valued everything that I said, 'Let's ask Melissa!' So that made me feel better about being so old. Everybody just done graduated from high school, didn't know what they wanted to major in, just takin' a class. So it made me

feel good cause I just actually was pretty much leadin' everything. If there was a group I was pretty much a leader, just delegatin'-'Ok you do this, you do that.' So that really made me feel a part of it, not feel so bad about bein' so old.

Therefore, the varied activities, courses, teaching styles, and personal communications with administrators, faculty and staff were critical to the community college persistence of the African-American women who participated in this study.

Employment

Three of the ten participants did not work while they attended community college. Two were unable to work because of medical conditions, while the other one had the support of a husband. The other seven participants worked full or part time while attending community college. Working affected their community college success in various ways. Heather stated, "[work] has affected my grades some. I think that's because I did not have time to really study because I work forty hours a week at the Westin Hotel. I'm an operator; I answer phones which is kind of nice because I really don't do too much and in between time I can study, but usually with sign language you have to use a T.V. to really effectively study." Two of the participants were waitresses, and their jobs affected their college experience in ways very different from Heather's situation. Kim's comments made this difference very clear. She said, "school affects my work because I get four or

five hours sleep at night. [I] come in to work, I'm grumpy, I'm tired, and sometimes I even try to do my homework while I'm at work. And I get mad when people come in the restaurant interrupting my study. So school affects my work." Shami, also a waitress, attended community college during the day, worked at night, and cared for a younger sibling. She indicated that these responsibilities we

> a lot of work for somebody who's my age. I have to work forty hours a week during school and that's really hard. I get home at one in the morning and I have a paper. But then you gotta do what you gotta do. So I may feel I could do a lot better if I didn't have to work, but I have to work so I deal with it.

Lisa is a receptionist at the University of Washington where she inputs data for the Communications Department. Her perceptions about working and going to school are similar to those of Shami and Kim. She voiced them simply saying, "When you work all day and have to go to school at night it's like there isn't a whole lot of time for homework." Yet these women did not let the burden of working stop them from proceeding with their college education. Work was a necessary that simply had to be negotiated along with everything else.

Other participants had a somewhat easier time. Andrea was working in home health care and she considered this a "blessing." Previously she had worked part-time and attended school part-time. The responsibilities of a job, school, and home proved to be very challenging. Now she feels

> it's almost like not havin' a job. I don't have the stress of tryin' to run here and there so it works better. But it was hard before because I was on the bus. I worked in Bellevue. I lived in Renton, so it was like an hour bus ride. I'd be on the bus tryin' to study zoology and draw diagrams with the bus vibrations and everything. I would go to bed every night at like 2:30 and start it all over again at 6:00. So this home care is a blessing from God. He just blessed me with this because it makes it a whole lot easier.

This job is in Andrea's field of nursing and she is also gaining knowledge and experience while she is studying. This combination helped make college attendance more manageable for her. Some of the other participants were likewise advantaged by combining educational and working experience. Carlisia was provided with an internship while she was in community college. She made dresses for transvestites in the area. Although it was demanding Carlisia said, "I just had to make time to work [on the dresses] on the week-ends to fulfill my internship. So it just kind of went hand-in-hand [with the program] because I already worked on the weekends anyway doing homework. So it just fell into the same line. It helped increase my sewing skills and helped me sew faster and do more details." Babette held two jobs, both on campus. One was with the Women's Center and the other was in student leadership. She recalled that, "in the beginning it was ok…I was doing administrative assistant stuff and it was interesting being around other

women. It got to the point it was too much. I felt like I was drowning in my schoolwork. At that time I got into student leadership…It was just hard cause seven days a week I was at it."

Melissa had a different perspective on working and going to community college. She was not working at the time of the study, but she worked while going to school. During the time she worked she felt it enhanced her study habits and grades. She explained,

> I was more disciplined. I got things done on time, I didn't procrastinate because I had to stick to a certain schedule. I knew I had to go to work, I knew I had this, this, and this, so it actually helped me…I was more tired but I was much more disciplined and it actually helped me to stay on track. It helped me to stay on schedule and do well in my classes.

Most of the participants had to work in order to survive. They made the choice to attend community college and they work hard to maintain a balance between work and their pursuit of higher education. Despite the difficulty in managing the demands of a job and school, working actually encouraged, rather than discouraged them to persevere in their efforts to obtain a college degree.

Finances

One of the biggest obstacles to higher education for African-American women is money. Some of the participants in this study shared that the financial aid they received was a major factor that kept them in community college. Heather stated it well when she said, "the money is definitely a plus because I haven't had to pay for a penny…I didn't have to pay for nothin'. They definitely helped me financially with some financial assistance which I am very grateful." Shami agreed with Heather, that the financial aid she received helped her to stay in college.

Some other participants need more financial assistance in order to move forward with their higher education. While Heather is grateful for the financial assistance she has received, more is needed. She pleaded:

> give me some more money so I don't have to work as much on my job to be able to support me and my daughter. I don't even have a lot of expenses. I'm not a person who runs up credit cards. Its just average everyday living costs. If I were able to have a little bit more finances to help support me in that then I'd be not working as much and be able to focus more on my schooling.

Shami expressed similar needs. She is the primary caretaker of her younger sister and complains that "[the community college] doesn't recognize that I'm looking after my little sister. It doesn't really make much of a difference because I'm not her legal

guardian, so they don't recognize that." But she agreed with Heather, more financial aid would give her more time to concentrate on her studies. She proposed that "if I had more time to my school work then maybe it would be easier on me." For Melissa limited funds was

> a big stumbling block, [the money] cause you can go to school fulltime but then you have to sacrifice the money. So that means that you can't do a lot. You have to cut down on your family activities or whatever you buy, or whatever you're gonna do. It cuts down other areas. So if you had enough funding to where you could still go to school and still contribute to the family it'll be a lot less stressful.

Financial assistance personnel who were willing to use extra efforts to help students were identified by Kim and Jomme as critical factors in their college survival. They also felt that students should be assertive and persistent in seeking out this assistance. Kim described her own actions to demonstrate the effects that this initiative can produce. She explained that

> I went into the [financial aid] office religiously every week to make sure my papers were right. So they helped me get my work-study. I changed my schedule around a couple of times and didn't go through the proper procedure. [It] almost messed up my aid cause

I didn't know. So the ladies pulled me to the side and said 'This is what you're supposed to do.' I was really scared cause I thought I was gonna have to pay for school. I didn't really have the money so they just helped me. They said 'Don't worry about; it we'll take care of it.

Jomme echoed Kim's sentiments. She was fortunate enough to "make a friend in financial aid that was really helpful in every way possible in getting me as much money as possible." Although the women did receive money for school, they thought it was interesting that the key to financial aid is having no money. Jomme wondered why "the less you have the better off you are in terms of getting money to go to school. When I didn't have a dime then it's like "Here's some money." It amazed Melissa as well. She stated, "You can't be half way makin' it. You gotta be broke down. It doesn't make sense."

The presence and absence of adequate finances supported the persistence of community college students who participated in this study. Some of them received money to attend school but still must had to work to make a living. Others had adequate financial aid and other income, which enabled them to attend community college full time. All of them persisted in efforts to get a higher education, if for no other reason than to improve their financial conditions in the future. In the final analysis the participants, while wishing

there was more money available, they were grateful for what they received and the assistance that went along with it.

Encouragement of Friends/Others

Most of the participants in this study did not have much time for extra curricular activities or friends. Some of them do have friends who also are students in their programs of study. Although rather limited these interactions with others who shared their educational goals and experiences helped the participants in this study to perform better in college. Heather, who is enrolled in the Interpreter Training Program, noted that the students are required "to be in touch with all your classmates. We do a lot of different things together or if I do anything activities-wise it's usually with the people who are in my group, learning sign language." Andrea is a student in the nursing program. With her school schedule and work responsibilities she does not have much time for friends. The majority of her friends are people in the nursing program or in medical school. She stated, "I think that has a lot to do with [college success]. I work in the medical field now so a lotta people that do the same job I do are students in the medical field so that's about all the mixin' I get to do with my social life."

Carlisia did not have much social time in the Apparel Design Program because it was too intense. She spent many long days at the community college, sometimes from 6:30 in the morning until 9:30 at night. The program was designed for the students to use the resources provided by the college. Carlisia observed that "everything you need is there

and you can bounce stuff off of your classmates if you have questions... I was at school the majority of the time. There was no social life unless it was with my classmates."

Shami tries to make friends within her classes on the first day of the quarter. It is important to her to network with other students for studying purposes. She also tries to "figure out who is clever and who'll be able to help me." As a result of this initial contact Shami meets "at school to study and get to know people." However, she admitted, "You don't end up studying the whole time; you end up talking to people." Shami felt more comfortable with students with a similar ethnic background. She reflected, "I don't really hang out with that many people from school except [those] who are African, which is bad but that's just the way it is you know?" Melissa tired to make friends on campus but things did not work out. She shared this story: "I did join this African-American Unity group and I was really excited about it until I went to one of the meetings. Oh God, everyone was so young in their conversations. I just couldn't relate. So now I don't have a social life on campus."

The participants in this study have others inside and outside of the community college who encouraged and supported them before they entered and during their time in college. Melissa and Andrea shared stories of encouragement by default they received in high school and the impact it had on their community college pursuit. Melissa's high school friends indirectly encouraged her to go on to higher education through the non-examples they provided. She explained:

> everybody that I hung around with nobody was in college prep.

> That was considered a White thing. It actually encouraged me because I wanted to do more than what I saw them doing and what they probably were gonna do and become. So it actually encouraged me to continue to go on and stay in those classes and go ahead and go to college. I did get ridiculed quite often as, 'Oh, you think you're better than us. Oh, you think you're White.' I don't know what that has to do with getting an education. So with them tryin' to discourage me [it] actually encouraged me to continue to go on.

A staff member in the college planning office also encouraged Melissa to pursue a college education. This person shared information, contacts, and networks with Melissa, thus making it easier for her to obtain support for her own education efforts. In reflecting on these interactions, Melissa said they:

> really encouraged me because, coming from Texas, it's that close knit feeling where you meet somebody and they take you in. I hadn't really met anybody in Seattle like that so to meet her, and for her to be like that, really encouraged me. It just helps to see someone that looks like you where you wanna go, so that was really encouraging.

Andrea told another version of the same story about the motivating influence of friends in her aspirations for a college education. Her friends told her she must go to class because she was going to be successful. Andrea did not like that pressure at the time, but recognized its value later on. She remembered that

> [In high school] I was a square that tried to fit in with everybody else. My friends would be cuttin' class and stuff, and they would be like, 'Girl, you know you need to go to class.' It would be funny because even though I hung around a lot of wrong people, they would never let me fall into that. They were always pushing me to stay the square as opposed to tryin' to fit in with them. So, I guess a lotta my friends actually encouraged me to pursue my education.

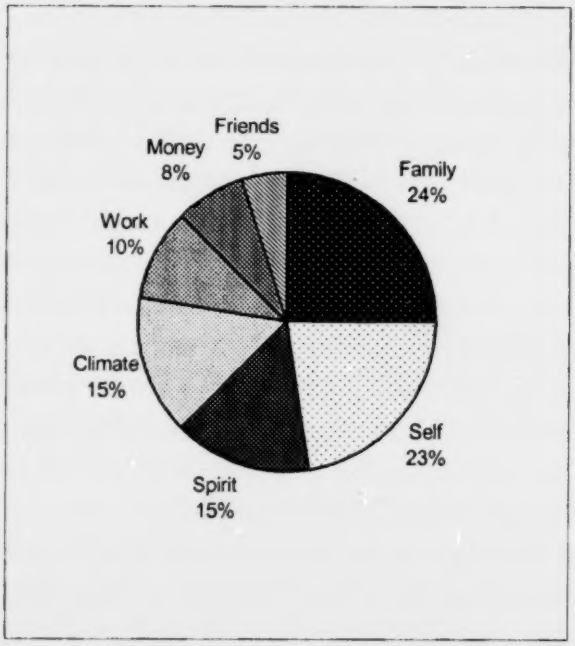
Andrea found other support in the Admissions Office. She declared that Seattle Central can give you the "run around tryin to get one question answered." An admissions office staff member was really good about encouraging her when "they were sending me here and sending me there and trying to do as much as she could to help me. She is one person that sticks out in my mind for encouragement." Carlisia had a few people who definitely stood by her financially, emotionally, and spiritually. She indicated these individuals "prayed for me, brought me food when I was starving.' They were definitely there." The teachers in her program of studies also provided useful support. Carlisia said,

"they know how tough the program is and they were really encouraging and really support you, and help you get to where you need to be to graduate."

Summary

The portraiture of survival strategies that were constructed from the findings in this study is depicted visually in figure 1. It shows that family support and self-responsibility were almost of equal importance. Together they accounted almost half (47 percent) of the survival strategies suggested by the participants. Institutional climate and spirituality also were of equal significance, with a combined 30 percent. The strategies offered least often by the participants were work opportunity, availability of money, and friendship networks.

Figure 1. Survival Strategies



A summary of the study along with discussion of the findings and recommendations for practice that community colleges can implement to improve the persistence of African-American women, and suggestions for future research are included in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter includes four major parts. The first is an overall summary of the study, which reviews the purpose, procedures, and results. In the second section of the chapter the findings of the study are discussed. The focus of this discussion is on making sense of the patterns and trends that emerged from the data. In the third section of the chapter some recommendations are made for improving community college education for African-American students. These practice recommendations focus on things community colleges can do to make academic success and social adaptation to the institutional climate more effective for African-American females and other students of color. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research. These suggest ways that the present study cay be complemented to generate additional insights into the persistence skills of underrepresented ethnic groups in postsecondary education.

Summary

This study was conducted to examine the survival strategies or persistence skills of African-American women in community colleges. It was important to study this issue because there is very little research information available about African-American women who are succeeding in community colleges. Most of the little research that does exist offers very general information; tends to group all African-American students together;

and emphasizes descriptions of enrollment trends. However, it does indicate that an academic and social fit between individuals and the institution is needed for African Americans to persist in higher education. Students must feel that the institution is accessible and a welcome place, and that there are programs and activities that meet their needs. The research information that exists on African Americas in community colleges also shows that women tend to succeed at a higher rate than men. Adding to this sparse body of research, and explaining why and how some African-American women prevail in higher education made this study worthwhile.

The major research questions concentrated on identifying and describing the survival strategies African-American women used to persist in community college. They examined what the strategies were through the self-reports of a small (10) group of participants; whether there was any consensus among the participants on these strategies; and what community colleges can do to increase the persistence of African-American women. Implicit in these questions was the assumption that staying in college is a challenge for many African-Americans. It derived in part from conventional wisdom about the difficulties African Americans have in other levels of education, and in part, from information about the kinds of students who typically attend community colleges.

The participants in this study were ten African-American women who attended Seattle Central Community College in Seattle, Washington. Four of the participants were mothers; eight were single, and two were married. Six of the participants worked part or full-time, two were unable to work because of disabilities, one was seeking employment,

and one was a homemaker. Only four of the participants were younger than 30 years old. Three had completed their studies at Seattle Central in the past two years. Eight of the participants were in the academic transfer program, one was in the Interpreter Training Program, and one completed the Apparel Design Program.

The portraiture research method was used to collect the data for this study and to construct a composite profile of community college survival strategies of African-American women. Creating research portraitures involves analyzing and characterizing repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional and cultural rituals, patterns and trends, and the triangulation of data (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals and a focus group. An interview protocol was developed to guide the conversations, and additional questions were asked during each interview as the interviews evolved, and to gain greater clarification of what was being said. The participants and the researcher worked together to select locations for the interviews. The settings varied, and included private homes, public coffee house, and on campus. Places were selected that were convenient and comfortable for the participants, and where they could share in-depth answers to the questions asked in private.

The initial interviews were conducted during a two-week period in September 2000. One to two interviews were conducted every other day until all were completed. Each interview was audio taped, and handwritten notes were made of key points and phrases to be remembered. Each interview was forty-five minutes to one hour in length. A

follow-up focus group interview was conducted in December 2000. Three participants took part in it. They were selected because they were representative of the range of the experiences and perspectives of the ten participants. One was very assertive and prolific in sharing experiences, perspectives, and college coping strategies; one was somewhat expressive and tended to be rather pensive and reflective in her responses; the other one initially tended to be hesitant in responding but did offer rich data after being prompted and probed. The focus group interview was designed to clarify points made in the individual interviews. For example, exploring support from members of the family other than mothers, and exploring in greater detail information about asking for aid and assistance. It lasted for 45 minutes. All of the audio taped interviews were transcribed before any analysis began.

Following the portraiture research methodology the transcriptions were analyzed for recurrent patterns and trends in the information provided by the study participants. These analyses revealed seven categories of themes or strategies African-American women used to survive in the community college they attended. Data related to each of the themes were read several times and further coded into more specific techniques. The smaller codes or techniques were grouped together in order of importance, and presented as the major findings of the study.

Seven key themes or strategies for surviving in community college emerged from this investigation. In sequential order, from the most to the least consensual among the African-American women who participated in this study, they are:

- Support from Family Members
- Assuming responsibility for one's own success
- Spirituality, or the belief in redeeming power of a Supreme Being
- Support from within the institutional climate of the college
- Employment needs and academic aspirations
- Finances investments and obligations
- Encouragement of friends and others during college matriculation

These strategies have different elements embedded within them, some more than others. For example, self-responsibility with the most, included self-determination and motivation, goal setting, building a foundation, seeking assistance, and minimizing struggle. Institutional climate had fewer related elements, however, among them were actions of administrators, faculty and staff, diversity, and age. Finances had the least amount of elements with financial aid and the lack of funds being the most important.

Discussion

Many theoretical studies (Astin, 1975, 1985; Tinto, 1982; Clark & Crawford, 1992) have indicated the ability of African-American students to persist in higher education is directly related to the institution itself. Several of these studies suggested that the "goodness of fit" and integration of the students into the institution predict who will remain in college, and how well they will perform. Tinto (1975,1987, 1993), for example,

suggested for students to be successful in college they need to be socially and academically integrated into the institution's culture. Other theorists and researchers (Poussaint, & Atkinson, 1972; Grambs, 1972) have suggested underachieving African-American students have external locus of control and will credit educational institutions, rather than themselves for their academic and social performance.

According to these theories it might be expected that the participants in this study would hold the college itself responsible for their persistence success or failure. This was not the case. Of the seven survival strategies that emerged from the data analyses institutional climate was fourth in order of importance. It was out-ranked by family support, self-responsibility, and spirituality. This study also found that asking for help was near the end of the set of institutional climate strategies. The participants in this study spoke of the instructors and the support of the community college with much higher regard than merely helping with small tasks. Institutional representatives were perceived more as mentors who made support networks accessible and demonstrated confidence in their desire and ability to effectively negotiate community college.

There are many possible reasons why the participants in this study prioritized the survival strategies as they did. One is personal maturity. As the demographic information indicated, more than half of the women were 30 years old or older. In this sense they meet the profiles of community college students provided by Bers, (1983) and Roueche and Roueche (1993). They described women students as being older, taking college more seriously, and experiencing mid-life transitions. They also characterized community

college students as attending school part-time, having to work full-time, being responsible for immediate and extended family members, and starting college, dropping out and then returning after long absences. The participants in this study were highly consistent with these profiles. Except for the two who were physically unable, they worked full-time in jobs that were not highly skilled, were heads of households, and most were raising their children alone. One even had assumed parental obligations for a younger sister. Their responsibilities were tremendous, which made it amazing that these women even attempt to attended college, least of all persisted in their efforts.

The age of the women in this study may explain why self-responsible and various forms of networking were high among their survival strategies. Some of them returned to school after years of working in positions that no longer appealed to them. For example, both Heather and Jomme had careers that were demanding and paid fairly well. Heather wanted to leave her high-pressure job and engage in a career that was personally fulfilling to her and minimally stressful. She decided to return to school and study something that was more important to her than money. Her choice was the Interpreter Training Program. Jomme became ill while working in a local retail business. Her illness prevented her from continuing in that particular position. She returned to school to complete a degree in social work. She believed that attending a community college was best for her because of her medical condition. She also believed that it was better that she attended community college later in life because she was more vested in education and performed better. She reflected that students at younger ages do not fully appreciate what a good education has

to offer. Returning to school at an older age made her more concerned about genuine learning rather than merely getting good grades. The community college persistence of the women in this study displayed evidence of what Tinto (1987) called resiliency, perseverance, and determination. Despite serious obstacles and struggles that might have caused others who were younger and did not have their strength to give up, they kept pressing on. Their physical appearance and pyschoemotional demeanor did not convey images of being burdened or overwhelmed. Instead, they were energetic, excited, upbeat, and hopeful.

Some women in this study attended community college for the first time later in life. Melissa enrolled in a major university immediately after graduation from high school but left before completing a degree to get married. She returned to community college to meet requirements to transfer to the university to finish her degree. She felt that community college worked better with her personal schedule, and since she had not attended school for some time she would be more comfortable in a smaller setting. Lisa returned to community college after attending a major university. She wanted to change to another major and needed to complete the credit requirement to transfer to a university. Lisa also felt more comfortable in a smaller educational setting. Babette had children early in life and had no choice but to work. She finally realized that she needed an education if she were to make a better life for herself and her children. She returned to school not knowing specifically what she wanted to do, but she knew she had to do something, and she did it. Undoubtedly, the maturing experience affected how these women determined

what was needed for them to persist in their college education. These factors, along with others such as their age, ethnicity, and parenthood, make them fit into the category of "non-traditional students" who comprise the greater number of community colleges enrollments.

Four of the participants were mothers. Motherhood made them more responsible for their own lives. The women were pursuing a higher education as part of that responsibility. They had to take care of their own children and they wanted to make a better life for them. The children were the most important part of their lives, and an education ensured a better future for them. Motherhood played another significant role in the persistence of the women because they viewed themselves as role models for their children. The women spoke about how important it was for their children to see them pursuing an education. They hated having to sacrifice spending time with their children in order to meet the demands of their college education. They took special care to ensure that the children understood why this sacrifice was an investment in their future. Consequently, taking care of their children was a major source of inspirational family support for them staying in college.

In connecting their own education to that of their children these 10 women may have been replicating a lived experience, and living up to an educational principle well documented by research and practice. In the first instance, their mothers set educational standards and expectations for them. Their mothers also may have set precedents for them to follow in how they prevailed to achieve their own education. Even those whose

education was relatively basic could have conveyed to their children that they were "the hope of the future," and would achieve an educational level the mothers were not be able to do. They seem to be carrying on this tradition with their own children by being living examples of the importance of education, rather than merely teaching it. In the second instance, these women are a testament to the fact that the education of mothers correlates highly with the performance of students. This trend is well-documented in K-12 schooling and four-year colleges and universities. The experiences of this study's participants indicate that it operates at the community college level as well.

The participants in this study have not had easy and carefree lives. They have financial difficulties, low-level vocational skills, childcare dilemmas, health issues, social problems, and single parenthood. Adversity and struggle are a familiar presence in their lives. It is not surprising then, that they consider struggling as an inherent part of the educational process. These women believed that education was the window to a better life. They witnessed this effect in others. Some experienced it personally, and all of them wanted it for themselves. The women wanted to be able to pay bills, provide a nurturing environment, and eventually send their children to college without agonizing over money. These expected benefits of a community college education are consistent with the mission of the institution, which is to help students develop practical and vocational skills. This compatibility is probably another reason why these women were surviving in community college as well as they were.

Claims are frequently made that African Americans do not value education, are lazy and shiftless, do not desire to have a better life, and will not assume self-responsibility for their own destiny. This was not the case with the participants in this study. These women were hard working, strong, self-accountable, and aspiring (Howard-Vital, 1989). Admittedly they felt their goals were hard to achieve. This was so not because the goals were unreasonable or fanciful, nor because the women were depending on others, but because they had limited resources. Education was high among their beliefs about ways to improve their lives. Several of the participants even returned to educational pursuits after unsuccessful first efforts.

There was an element of isolation to these women's community college experiences. This was most evident in the lack of participation in the non-academic affairs of the college, and the absence of strong social and friendship networks with others across the campus. Probably the biggest obstacles to this were multiple responsibilities and employment demands. These women simply did not have the time to just hang out on campus and socialize. But, not being able to do so caused them to miss out on some valuable networking opportunities and social learnings that could have made their coping with college even more effective, as well as having positive benefits after college. Nor could they contribute as much as they potentially could to the college. Thus, Howard-Vital's (1989) notions that African-American women are often isolated and under-utilized in higher education were supported by the findings of this study.

Finances proved to be a challenge for the women in this study; however, they were very resourceful. They had little money but they found what was needed to pay their community college fees. They navigated through the financial aid system and found ways to receive funds. Some of them also worked while attending college. All of the participants admitted that they were tired and stressed from working, attending college, and personal responsibilities, but they were doing what they had to do in order to get where they wanted to be in life. They made a commitment to a goal and worked with what they had to get through the struggles to obtain it.

The women had to make many sacrifices to persist in their pursuit of a community college education. They sacrificed time with their children and missed many special events in their lives. They also sacrificed money to do other things, and their social and personal lives. The only people they interacted with socially were usually students in their programs of study. Sacrifice was worn like an extra layer of clothes. Despite all this these women were prevailing and succeeding in their educational pursuits.

Physically, the women interviewed were very different from each other. Some were short, some were tall; some were married, and others were not; some had physical disabilities. The women performed multiple demanding roles. They were mothers, workers, and students. Each one had faced some sort of adversity in her life. But, they were strong, and the strength they displayed was amazing. Divinity had multiple sclerosis, was legally blind, and the single parent of three children, and had little outside support. Yet, she attended school each day and did quite well academically. She did not allow the

adversity she was experiencing to deter her from pursing an education. She even felt lucky to have what she had, and obligated to make the best of it for herself and her children. Kim was incarcerated for several years in her early twenties. While she was away, she realized that once she returned to society she needed to make a better life for herself. Her mother encouraged her to go to school and she went. Kim planned to complete the associate arts, bachelor's, master's and eventually her Ph.D degrees. She understood the mistakes she made when she was younger, and she wanted to avoid repeating them in the future. She worked as a waitress while attending college, and was very careful about following the rules of her parole. She was candid about her past life and wanted others to learn from her mistakes. Kim took the adversity in her life and made something positive out of it.

Carlisia attended community college immediately after graduating from high because of her mother's influence. She completed an associate of arts of degree and moved away. After returning to Seattle some years later she decided to continue her education. This time she enrolled in the Apparel Design Program. This was an intense program and Carlisia enjoyed the challenge. She had support from friends and family, and she succeeded to graduation. These patterns of adversity, responsibilities, and college attendance among the participants in this study are highly consistent in Bers' (1983) description of women in community colleges, and why they are likely to be part-time students. These behavioral trends also explain why older African Americans take longer to complete programs of study than more traditional White students.

Each woman who participated in this study told a unique version of a common story – one of struggle, sacrifice, perseverance, and a strong commitment to obtaining some postsecondary education. They, therefore, confirmed the theories and research findings of other scholars (i.e., Bers 1983; Roueche & Roueche 1993; Tinto 1987) about who they are, their non-traditional status, how they engage with higher education, their reasons for attending community colleges, and why these choices are good matches for them. These women never let the fact that this educational journey was difficult stop them from moving forward. Despite the fact these women were mature, mothers, resourceful, and strong, they were not invincible. They needed help even if they did not often ask for it explicitly and directly. The women were appreciative that the community college was a supportive environment for their endeavors, and that faculty and staff offered support and guidance along the way. Andrea, Kim, and Lisa all shared stories of professors who encouraged them to maintain contact after completing their courses. This type of care and concern gave the women the confidence they needed to persist.

Contrary to findings reported by Mayo and Christenfeld (1999) that African Americans and other minority college female students tend to have low performance expectations of themselves, this was not the case in this study. Although the participants admitted having occasional bouts of uncertainty about their ability to succeed in college or master particular tasks, (such as asking for help from others), overall they were optimistic about their ability to perform well in their programs of study. When this did not occur, as sometimes happened with them not getting the best grades possible, they were perceptive

about the cause and not self-doubting about their abilities. A critical factor that may have accounted for this self-confidence was the absence of the comparative factor that was included in the Mayo and Christenfeld (1999) study. These women were not asked to compare their abilities with each other, African-American males, or with members of other ethnic groups. Nor were they asked to talk about their performance in particular academic tasks or courses. Had this happened different responses may or may not have been given. As the data stand, these 10 women exhibited strong self-efficacy, possibly too much so as evident by some of them being reluctant and even apologetic about asking for help.

Community colleges could better serve some of the women if there were more explicit interventions in the beginning of programs of study. The participants in this study wanted to know exactly what was expected of them when they first entered the community colleges. Andrea shared a story of frustration when she visited her counselor several times before discovering that there were some prerequisites she needed before taking certain biology classes. Kim almost lost her financial aid because she did not understand the procedure for completing some required paperwork, and it was not explained to her. Luckily she met an African-American staff member who helped her in time. Lisa also wanted more clear-cut information about program policies and procedures. She had taken some classes she did not need because she did not receive the correct information. The women wanted some sort of orientation to the information they needed

to do well. They took the initiative and were responsible for their education, but they wanted more support along the way.

The struggles and self-reliance displayed by these African-American women can be viewed as a strength, and a dilemma. They may think they do not deserve the help so they do not ask for it. Melissa made this point very strongly. Since the women do not readily ask for help it becomes a challenge for the community colleges to find imaginative techniques for recognizing these needs, and responding to them in ways that honor the dignity and privacy of the individuals. The college must play a creative and aggressive role to get the women to seek out the help they need.

These participants readily recognized that their accomplishments were not done alone, or even just with family support. Many of them believed in a higher power, a Supreme Being. They found strength in God and Allah. They held on to their faith and its redeeming power fiercely because sometimes they needed to be anchored by something or someone greater than themselves. As these women journeyed through community college, many believed that if God or Allah were not in their lives they would not make it through. They needed this extra help. The women felt their beliefs and efforts would be rewarded on earth not just after death. They spoke of prayer as means of strength, and they used it to seek guidance, endurance, protection, perseverance, and understanding.

Research conducted by Feagin and Sikes (1995) and Tatum (1999) indicated that students, especially African Americans, tend to identify and affiliate with those who are most like them. To that end the women in this study engaged in networking within and

outside of the college. They found African-American administrators, faculty, and staff who supported their endeavors while in community college, as well as peers within their particular programs of study. Some of the women were involved in activities within the school that provided broader networking opportunities. For example, Melissa encountered an African-American woman on campus who provided her with career information. Andrea found support from a staff member who helped her negotiate the college bureaucracy so she did not have to run around to several different offices. Lisa worked with a counselor who took a special interest in her, and eventually became a close friend. This networking provided the women with contacts and means to move forward through the community college successfully. Although relatively few, the individuals these women contacted and interacted with on campus were "significant others" in their college lives. Faughn (1982) describes these as people in positions of power, influence, and authority who impact the lives of others.

While these networks were expedient in that they responded to the immediate needs of the students, they could be perceived by some as undesirable and inappropriate. Such opinions could stem from the fact that (1) the women did not go through "normal channels" to get assistance, they went to people they could trust; and (2) most of the women sought out other African Americans for assistance. This could be interpreted by some as engaging in ethnic isolation and separation. Others might see these actions as not getting maximum benefits from networking efforts because the African-American staff members these students consulted were not necessarily the top-level power brokers of the

institution. Why did the women in this study make the kinds of networking choices they did? Probably because they thought African-American staff members would be more accessible, approachable, and supportive. If this were the case they were operating out of expectations and lived experiences about educational institutions being racist and hostile toward African Americans. Thus, by networking with other African Americans these women were engaging in behaviors similar to those of the students in Tatum's (1999) study who formed social networks to satisfy their needs that often were incompatible with school norms and expectations.

The legacy of African-American women in the U.S. has been one of power and strength along with struggle. Historically, women have been the stronghold of families and communities. They provided strength when all else failed. African-American women have persevered even in the worst situations. The women in this study were no different. It is almost a stereotype that African-American women are supposed to struggle. These women accepted this stereotype proudly. They understood that struggle and persistence were positive things. Strength was something that was handed down to them from their ancestors. One way to honor their foremothers was to purse an education to make things better for the next generation. This was their motivation to press forward; it was not a burden, but an honor.

Recommendations For Practice

The participants in this study, and possibly others like them, are struggling but they are prevailing in their higher education studies. This could be interpreted to mean that the institution does not need to do anything to assist them. Quite the contrary is true. Community colleges should develop programs and practices that help African-American women and other students of color not merely survive but strive in their educational endeavors.

The findings in this study generated several ideas for things that community colleges can do to improve the persistence of African-American women. They are described separately and are intended to respond to each of the survival strategies identified by the study participants, but they are not totally discrete or mutually exclusive. Just as the survival strategies cultivated by the participants are closely interrelated, so are the recommendations for community college practices. These interrelationships suggest that institutional strategies for improving the persistence of African-American women should be systematic and long-term – that is, involve all aspects of the community college and occur over long periods of time. However, for ease of management the recommendations for practice are presented separately. There are eleven of them.

Create orientation programs

Create an orientation program for African-American women as they enter the institution. This orientation would be to assist the women in getting acclimated to the

college campus, climate, culture, and operations. The orientation would be much like that some community colleges already do, but geared specifically toward African-American women, and addressing their seven survival strategies. Some elements that might be included in the orientation are note-taking techniques, organization strategies, financial aid assistance, ways to connect with your advisor, how to register for class, how to decide your future based on your education, walking tours of the campus, and peer tutoring opportunities.

Student input

Ask the women during orientation what they want from the college. Ask them what they need in order to be successful and incorporate their suggestions into the workings of the college. Have some of the women who show leadership ability assist in the implementation of these suggestions. Participation in making decisions that affect their college careers could improve the persistence and performance of African-American women in community colleges.

Develop a mentorship program

Develop a mentorship program for African-American women. The concept of the program would be to have African-American women connect with a mentor within the college or out of the college who works in conjunction with the academic program. The mentors could be in the field of study of the women. They also could be the night crew janitors at the college, and professional career-oriented persons. Or, mentors could be individuals skilled in human relations and personal development who provide support in

times of need and struggle, and help students work out problems, or be of use as a sounding board. This would give the women a sense of worth and peace of mind to know someone is looking out for them.

Assign "Life Advisors"

Assign students to a "life advisor." This person would check on the women once a month, bi-monthly, or once a quarter to see how they are doing. Life advisors would work with the same students throughout their community college career. They would work closely with the academic advisor if necessary, but they would be the person whom the women could turn to for other kinds of help. For example, students might need assistance in daycare needs, housing needs, or relationship support. The life advisors would have the resources, such as budgets, offices, and assistance from need-specific social agencies, to assist in crises that might arise during the quarter. The focus of this advisor would be to make sure the students remain in school, even when life obstacles get in the way. This could be incorporated into the mentorship program, or be a separate entity.

Design support groups

Design a system of support groups that addresses the needs of African-American women based on the seven survival strategies. There could be groups for single mothers; married mothers; those with health problems; those who are working and going to school; those who need a job; those who have a job but need a better one; those who are having

financial difficulties; or anything that the women encounter on a somewhat regular basis. These support groups could be held monthly with the women in a cohort-type of situation so that the same individuals are involved all the time. This way they could be comfortable. Each quarter or every two quarters a new cohort could begin. Or, the women could stay together participating in these activities until completion of the program. This might encourage them to complete college.

Recruit African-American administrators, faculty and staff

Recruit African-American women teachers, administrators, and staff to work on the college campus. It could be possible that African-American students who see others like themselves in a variety of roles and positions will have a higher rate of persistence. African-American women on campus could make a significant impact. They could participate in the mentoring, work with support groups and foster the growth of African-American women on the campus. If the information about this type of program was on the website of the college and the application it might attract more quality African-American women to the various positions of the college. A faculty or staff member being a mentor to an African-American female student also could be one of the preferred requirements of some job postings.

Implement programs for African-American women

Implement an entire program geared toward African-American women that touches on each of the facets of the college. The program could incorporate all of the recommendations listed here and it could incorporate the academic elements of the college

as well. It could be a resource center for careers, housing, daycare, and any other needs. Since it might be unrealistic for this program to stand alone due to the small number of African-American women students, it could be housed within the Women's Program and serve members of other ethnic groups.

Conduct workshops and mini-courses on survival strategies

Conduct workshops and mini-courses on each of the survival strategies generated by this study and incorporate these into programs for African-American women. Use more than speakers; including role-playing, round-table discussions, simulations, case study analyses, and readings to make the workshops more effective.

Recruit African-American women

Actively and imaginatively recruit African-American women to attend community college. Go out and find women who would like to go to college, but are facing some type of obstacle. Create a recruitment program that can assist in the removal of these obstacles. Since money and day care are the two largest obstacles for women, make those two the main focus of concern in the recruitment plans by providing on campus employment, and free or reduced-cost daycare services. The recruitment process must reach further than the high schools and job-fairs; it must reach into places it does not normally look, such as women's shelters, churches, and rehabilitation centers.

Create an "Each One-Teach One" program

Create an "Each One-Teach One" type of program. This could entail women working together to help support one another. They could help each other with academic

and personal issues, recruit for the college, mentor each other, and work to build a networking base at the college for others. The point of this program would be to help the women to understand two things: (1) you cannot do it all alone; and (2) since someone helped them they must reciprocate by helping someone else.

Establish a system of increase financial assistance

Establish a system of increased financial assistance for African-American women that will not create debt. The community college could seek out philanthropic organizations, such as the United Negro College Fund, Ford, Carnegie and Kellogg and the Bill Gates Foundations to help foster community college education. A program in which students give back to the community college or the community their time in exchange for their non-repayable grants would be another way to provide financial assistance. Community colleges also could expand their work-study programs and literally become a workplace for students.

Develop arts and speakers series of African-American women

Develop a system in which the campus art works and speakers are reflective of African-American women. The art pieces displayed in buildings and other campus locations should include more contributions of African-American artists. The college's speaker and performance series should include samples of a wide variety of African American people, perspectives and experiences. The series could be on-going throughout the year with special emphasis on Martin Luther King Day, Black History Month, and Women's History Month. The others months could highlight and showcase the African-

American Administration, faculty, staff, and students on the campus. This would give African-American women the opportunity to build a greater affinity with community colleges and provide opportunities to develop social networks with others like themselves on and off campus.

Embedded in these recommendations (individually and collectively) for how community colleges can contribute to the survival strategies of African-American women are some lessons learned from research conducted by Lomotey (1990). He found that the presence of ethnically specific programs and organizations at Oberlin College improved the performance and persistence of African-American students. Initiatives such as the Afrikan Heritage House and the Black Studies Program were places of refuge for the students from a college climate that was perceived to be racist, hostile, isolative, and lonely. They provided spaces where African-American students could find support, cultural knowledge, validation, kindredness, coping skills, community and self-renewal. These psychological and emotional reinforcements helped them improve their academic performance as well. They validated the premise made by Wilds and Wilson (1998) that students of color who understand and are prepared to deal with racism will have better academic performance at and social adjustment do predominately white colleges and universities. It is assumed that similar effects will occur for African-American women in community colleges from the recommendations for institutional practices proposed above.

Recommendations For Research

Since there is limited research on African-American women in community colleges, it is important for this issue to continue to be studied in the future. The recommendations for further research presented here include suggestions for extending the present study as well as examining similar issues with other ethnic groups. Five specific suggestions are made.

Expansion of the study

The first recommendation is to expand this study in three specific ways. One is to conduct a comparative study of the survival strategies of African-American women at different community colleges in similar geographic settings. One community college could be an institution that focuses on academic transfer while another emphasizes vocational technical training. Another comparison could involve African-American women on college campuses with varying ethnic population distribution – predominately European Americans, predominately students of color, and somewhat even distributions among ethnic groups. Another modification of the present study could focus on younger African-American women in community college to see how their survival strategies compare with those of older women. The premise for this study might be that there is a strong correspondence between the maturity levels of students and their survival strategies. A third study to enhance the present one is to add a dimension of observation using ethnographic methodologies. The observations would be designed to find out what survival strategies participants actually use in institutional settings and to determine the

extent to which observed behaviors are consistent with self-reported reflections of survival strategies. The observations might focus on behavior in classes and social settings; interactions with peers, instructors and institutional leaders; and performance in routine and stressful circumstances. The methodology for enhancement of this study could include individual and focus groups interviews of participants, as well as interviews with significant others in the participants' lives such as family members, instructors, administrators, friends, and support staff.

Enlarge the study

Another recommendation is to enlarge the existing study to include more women. A larger study would determine if the survival strategies presented here are typical or unique, and provide more possibility of generalizing the results. Participants could be randomly chosen for the study instead of self-selecting. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies could be used to collect the data. A survey questionnaire could be sent out. When returned, some of the items could be used for depth interviews with a smaller sample of the participants, arranged in focus groups.

Conduct the study in different geographical settings

A third study could be conducted in different geographical settings, (cities or states) across the United States. People have different experiences and where they live might play a part in their college persistence. The availability of community colleges might affect the strategies. Thus, the survival strategies of African Americans may be different in locations where there are many community colleges (i.e., Texas, California

and New York) from places where there are few (i.e., Georgia, Wyoming, Idaho). Comparative analyses can be done by a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Follow up study using ethnographic techniques

A fourth recommendation would be to use ethnographic techniques and observations to do follow up studies of the participants in this study who were enrolled in academic transfer programs as they move into four-year colleges and universities. One purpose of the study would be to determine if the survival strategies developed in community college continue in these other educational settings. Another would be to examine if additional survival strategies are developed. Comparisons also could be made between the survival strategies of these participants and other students who did not have community college experiences.

Research study using African-American men

Fifth, conducting research on the college survival strategies of African-American men would be very useful. It has been documented that African-American males have difficulty in the education process. For those who do prevail, how they do so is very important to know. The study would reveal if the survival strategies are similar to African-American women. The investigation could examine the effects of location, area of study, and education patterns on the college persistence of men. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies could be used to collect the data.

Conduct a similar study with women from other Ethnic backgrounds

Finally, a similar study should be conducted with women from other ethnic groups such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. The existing available research on women from these groups is even less than for African-Americans. Their educational needs, challenges, and survival strategies also need to be understood if community colleges are to better serve their ethnically diverse populations. The research techniques used for this type of study have to be culturally sensitive when selecting participants and data collection techniques in order to get rich, reliable data, and avoid violating cultural norms. These might include interviewing in a different language, selecting cultural settings that are comfortable for the participants, and using more focus groups instead of individual interviews.

FINAL STATEMENT

More and more African-American women are entering higher education, and the need for them to have successful experiences is paramount. To ensure that this happens community colleges and other postsecondary institutions must recognize their unique qualities and abilities. They must also understand that the needs of African-American women may be different from anyone else attending the college, and so might their survival strategies, or how they cope with these needs. Community colleges may have to implement innovative, culturally sensitive ways to assist these women in their pursuit of higher education

The African Americans in this study are strong, hard working, committed, aspiring, and persistent women who are devoted to getting an education. They do not resent or try to avoid the struggles that are involved in achieving their goals. Their efforts and achievements are worthy of both recognition and respect. These women want help, support, and to be heard. These are reasonable requests that should be honored. Hopefully, this dissertation makes a small contribution to meeting these needs for the 10 diligent and deserving women who participated in this study, as well as other African-American community colleges students throughout the United States who have similar challenges, motivations, and accomplishments.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Letter

My name is Terri Johnson. I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program. I am currently writing my dissertation on the survival strategies of African-American women in community college. You have been selected to participate in this study on the persistence strategies of African-American women in community college.

If you decide to participate I would like to interview you for 1 -11/2 hours on a date and at a time mutually agreed by both of us. The questions asked will focus on the persistence and the survival strategies you have used while in community college. Once all of the individual interviews have taken place, group interviews of five women each will take place for the same amount of time at a mutually agreed upon time and place. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed by an African-American woman. The tapes will be stored at my home during the study and destroyed once I graduate from the University of Texas at Austin.

Any information that is obtained in connection with study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission. Your name will not be used in my dissertation; I will use pseudonyms instead. You do not have to answer any of the questions you do not want to during the interviews.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relationship with Seattle Central Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time.

If after reading this letter decide to participate in my study please contact me directly by email at DRTLJ99@Yahoo.com or at (425) 793-5150 (this is a local call), or by signing this letter below and dropping it in the box at the reception desk of the Office of the President at Seattle Central Community College. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at the above email or telephone number. As a courtesy each participant will receive $10.00.

Thank you in advance for agreeing to help me out with this project.

Terri L. Johnson
University of Texas at Austin

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to chronicle the survival strategies of African-American community college women at Seattle Central Community College using portraiture. This study will investigate African Americans who have persisted through at least four quarters at Seattle Central Community College.

Research Questions

1. What survival strategies do African-American women use to persist?
2. What are the reasons African-American women survived and completed their programs of study?
3. What procedures can community colleges adapt to increase the probability of African-American student persistence?

Interview Questions

Past

1. Looking back, at your experiences before you entered community college, what experiences stand out to you as being important to your getting here and doing well?

    1.A. What specifically led you and made you a successful person?

    1.B How did your family help you, if at all?

    1.C. Do any teachers stand out?

    1.D. How did your friendships encourage/discourage you from school?

    1.E. Are you a religious person and if so how did that play a role in your persistence?

2. Are there any special people in your life that contributed to your success as you were growing up? Were there any special events that stand out that contributed to your success? Are there any special times you can think of that contributed to your success? Are there any times that might not be special but are significant?

2.A. Do you have children? If so, what role do your children play in your success? How have you managed taking care of the children and being successful in college? How do your children play a role in your wanting to be successful in college?

Present

1. What has helped you flourish/flounder in your community college experience?

2. What has kept you here in the community college?

3. Please give me some examples of times you were successful.

4. Are there any special people here at the college or in your life that contributed to your success now?

4.A. How is that person's contribution helping you with your current success?

5. In what way do you feel part of the institution?

5.A. How do you mix your academics and your social life on the campus?

5.B. Are there any activities in which you participate? Why or Why not?

6.A Do you work? What do you do? How does working affect your schooling?

Future

1. As you reflect on your life now, what does it mean to you?

1.A. What does being a community college student mean to you?

1.B. How does your community college experience affect other aspects of your life?

2.A. What can the institution do to assist you in your persistence?

2.B. What should the institution do that it is not doing now to aid in your successful completion of your goals?

Bibliography

Alliance for excellence: A partnership between black churches and area colleges for the advancement of minorities in higher education. (1993). Paper presented at "Leadership 2000" the annual conference of the League of Innovation (Eric Document 360029)

American Educational Research Association (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 319 333)

Progress report on people of color participation and diversity. (1998). The Washington State board for community and technical colleges.

Students who become nonpersisters: who, when, why, and to do what? The Astin index: One approach to predicting persistence at UMCP four years after initial enrollment. (1987). Maryland longitudinal study research highlights. Research reports 5 and 9. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 301 103)

Retention in Washington community and technical colleges. Research report. 97-3. (1997). Washington State board for community college and technical colleges: Education division.

Washington State Board for community and technical colleges; Education division. (1997). Retention in Washington community and technical colleges. Research report 97-3.

Webster's College Dictionary. (1991). New York: Random house.

Allen, W. (1985). Black student, white campus: Structural, interpersonal, and psychological correlates of success. Journal of Negro Education, 54(2), 134-147.

Allen, W.R. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominately white and historically black colleges and universities. Harvard Educational Review, 62(1) 25-44.

Arnold, F. (1993). "Time is not on our side": Cultural vs. structural explanations of black American women students' achievement in the urban, nonelite university. Urban Review, 25 (3), 199-220.

Astin, A. (1975). Preventing students from dropping out. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Astin, A. (1985). Achieving educational excellence. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Astin, A. (1993). What matters in college. Liberal Education, 79 (4), 4-15.

Banks, J.A., & Banks, C.A. (1993). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Banks, J.A., & Banks, C.A. (Eds.). (1995). Handbook of research on multicultural education. . New York: Macmillan publishing USA.

Bean, J.P. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a conceptual model of student retention. Research in Higher Education, 12(2), 155-187.

Bennett, H.C. (1995). Research on racial issues in American higher education. In J.A.Banks & C.A.M. Banks (Eds.), Handbook of research on multicultural education. (pp.663-679). New York: Macmillan publishing USA.

Bers, T.H. (1983). The promise and reality of women in community colleges. A paper presented at the conference of the American Educational research association to the special interest group on women in education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 242 365)

Blau, J. & Marshall, E. (1996). Black and white students in two-year colleges. Thought and Action, 12 (1), 113-127.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Brawer, F. B. (1996). Retention-Attrition in the Nineties. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 393510)

Butler, J. (1993). Transforming the curriculum: Teaching about women of color. In J.A. Banks & C.A.M. Banks (Eds.), Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives (pp. 149-164). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Carroll, J. (1988). Freshman retention and attrition factors at a predominantly black urban community college. Journal of College Student Development, 29(1), 52-60.

Clark, S.B. & Crawford, S.C. (1992). An analysis of African-American first year college student attitudes and attrition rates. Urban Education, 27 (1), 59-79.

Clewell, B. C. (1986). Improving Minority retention in higher education: A search for effective institutional practices (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 299841)

Clewell, B.C. and Anderson, B.T (1992). African-Americans in higher education: An issue of access. Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 21(2), 55-79.

Cohen, A. M. (1988). Trends and issues in community colleges, 1988: Minority student transfer. ERIC Clearinghouse for junior colleges, Los Angeles, Calif. (ERIC Document Reproduction No.293588)

Cope, R. (1975). Revolving Doors: The causes and consequences of dropping out, stopping out and transferring. New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Cross, W. (1991). Shades of black: Diversity in African-American identity. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Davies, T.G & Casey, K. (1999). Transfer experiences: comparing their academic and social lives at the community college and university. College Student Journal, 33(1), 60-71.

Davis, A. (1962). Social class influences upon learning. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom. New York: New York Press.

Dent, H.E. (1974). Institutional racism: A barrier to educational change. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 181 114)

Douzenis, A. (1996). The relationship of quality of effort and estimate of knowledge gain among community college students. Community College Review, 24 (3), 27-35.

Duncan, R. (1985). Four models for increasing student retention at the community college of Denver. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 269106)

Falcone, A. J. Project Pathways: A Longitudinal Investigation of Academic Persistence. Interim Report. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. 325 147)

Faughn, S. et al. (1982). Significant others: A new look at attrition. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American counseling and personnel association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 225 446)

Feagin, J.R. & Sikes, M.P. (1995). How black students cope with racism on white campuses. Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 0 (8), 91- 97.

Feldman, M.J. (1993). Factors associated with one-year retention in a community college. Research in Higher Education, 34 (4), 503-512.

Friedlander, J. & MacDougal, P. (1992). Achieving student success through student involvement. Community College Review. (20) 1, 20-29.

Fleming, J. (1984). Blacks in college. Jossey-Bass San Francisco

Fleming, J. (1983). Black women in black and white college environments: The making of a matriarch. Journal of Social Issues, 39 (3), 17-27.

Gold, J. et al. (1990). Black undergraduate adaptation to college as a predictor of academic success. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American association for counseling and development (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. 338 730)

Grambs, J.D. (1972). Negro Self-concept reappraised. In J.A. Banks & J.D. Grambs (Eds.), Black self-concept (pp.171-220). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Green, M. (Ed.). (1988). Minorities on campus: A handbook for enhancing diversity. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Gregory, S.T. (1995). Black women in the academy: The secrets to success and achievement. Maryland: University press.

Grosset, J.M. (1995). A multigroup structural equation modeling approach to test for differences in the educational outcomes process for African-American students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 382 640)

Halpin, R. (1990). An application of the Tinto model to the analysis of freshman persistence in a community college. Community College Review. (17) 4, 22-31.

Hale-Benson, F. (1987). Black children: Their roots, culture, and learning styles. In J.B. McCracken (Ed.), Reducing stress in young children's lives. (pp. 122-129). Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Halstead, D. K. (1981). Higher Education: A bibliographic handbook. Vol. II. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Henriksen, J. (1995). The influence of race and ethnicity on access to postsecondary education and the college experience. Eric Digest. California. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 386242)

Himelhoch, C.R. et al (1997). A comparative study of the factors which predict persistence for African-American students at historically black institutions and predominantly white institutions. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the association for the study of higher education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 415 813)

Howard-Vital, M.R. (1989). African-American women in higher education: Struggling to gain identity. Journal of Black Studies, 20 (2), 180-191.

Jackson, N. et al. (1996). Successful Community College recruitment and retention: Case studies. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Teacher Educators. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 395 902)

King, J.E. & Mitchell, C.A. (1990). Black mothers to sons: Juxtaposing African American literature with social practice. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lang, M, (1988). Black student retention in higher education. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Lanni, J.C. (1997). Modeling student outcomes: A longitudinal study. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 410 870)

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. & Hoffmann Davis, J. (1997). The art and science of portraiture. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lomotey, K. (1990). The retention of African-American students: The effects of institutional arrangements in higher education Paper presented at the annual meeting of

the American Educational Research Association (ERIC Document Service No. ED 319 333)

Martin, O. & Williams-Dixon, R. (1991). The student – institutional fit fort the African American student: Do college retention programs facilitate academic and social success? Paper presented at the Annual National Conference on Racial and Ethic Relations in American Higher Education (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 341351)

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1989). Designing qualitative research. Newbury Park: Sage.

Martin, O. & Williams-Dixon, R. (1991). The student – institutional fit fort the African American student: Do college retention programs facilitate academic and social success? Paper presented at the Annual National Conference on Racial and Ethic Relations in American Higher Education (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 341351)

Mohammadi, J. (1994). Exploring Retention and Attrition in a two-year public community college. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 382257)

Mayo, M.W. & Christenfeld, N. (1999). Gender, race and performance expectations of college students. Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 27(3), 93-105.

Mishler, E.G. (1979). Meaning in context: Is there any other kind? Harvard Educational Review 49, (1), 1-19.

Mutter, P. (1992). Tinto's theory of departure and community college student persistence. Journal of College student development 33, (4), 310-318.

Nettles, M.T. (1997). The African-American education data book: Higher education and adult education - volume 1. Frank Patterson research institute of the college fund/UNCF.

Niba, J. & Norman, R. Eds. (1989). Recruitment and retention of Black students in higher education. New York: Lanham.

Opp, R. & Colby, A. (1986). Improving student retention in community colleges. ERIC Digest (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 276 493)

Pascarella, E. et al. (1986). Long term persistence of two-year college students. Research in Higher Education, (24) 1, 47-70.

Perkins, L. M. (1983). The impact of the "Cult of true womanhood" on the education of black women. Journal of Social Issues 39, (3), 17-27.

Peterson, M. W. et al. (1978). Black students on white campuses: The impacts of increased black enrollments. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research.

Philip, M.C. (1993). Too many institutions still taking a band-aid approach to minority student retention. Black Issues in Higher Education. (9) 24, 24-26,28.

Ponsford, B.J. & Masters, L.A. (1998). How to use focus groups in higher education research. College and University 73, (3), 2-9.

Poussaint, A., & Atkinson, C. (1972). Black youth and motivation. In J.A. Banks & J.D. Grambs (Eds.), Black self-concept (pp.55-69). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rendon, L.I. (1988). Salvaging Minority transfer students: Toward new policies that facilitate baccalaureate attainment. Commissioned paper prepared for Carnegie Corporation quality education for minorities project. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED305 098)

Rendon, L.I. & Mathews, T.B. (1989). Success of community college students: current issues. Education and Urban Society 21, (3,) 312-327.

Rendon, L.I. (1993). Transforming at-risk students into powerful learners. Prepared for: The American association for higher education 1994 national conference Chicago IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 371 673)

Rendon, L. I. (1994). Beyond involvement: Creating validating academic and social communities in the community college. Keynote Address to the American River Community College (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 374 728)

Rendon, L.I. (1995). Validating student experience and promoting progress, performance, and persistence through assessment. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 381 051)

Richardson, R. & Bender, L. (1987). Fostering Minority Access and Achievement in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Richie, B.S., et al. (1997). Persistence, connection, and passion: a qualitative study of the career development of highly achieving African-American –black and white women. Journal of counseling psychology. 44, (2), 133-148.

Riessman, F. (1962). The culturally deprived child. New York: Harper Row.

Romero, O. & Eggler, J. (1987). Santa Barbara City College: Recruitment, retention and innovative instructional strategies for culturally diverse minority college students: A review of the literature. (Eric Document Reproduction Service Number 318 523)

Roueche, J.E & Roueche, S.D. (1993). Between a rock and a hard place: The at-risk student in the open-door college. Washington D.C.: Community college Press.

Rounds, J.C. (1984). Attrition and retention of community college students: Problems and promising practices. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. 242 377)

Rowser, J. (1997). Do African-American students' perceptions of their needs have implications for retention? Journal of Black Studies, 27(5), 18-26.

Sailes, G. A. (1990). An Investigation of Black Student Attrition at Indiana University. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED338 747)

Shade, B.J. (1982). African American cognitive style: A variable in school success? Review of educational research, (52), 219-244.

Seidman, I.E. (1991). Interviewing as qualitative research. New York: Teachers College Press.

Simmons, B. (1988). Foster black student enrollment at community colleges and historically black colleges in the same service area. Paper presented at the National conference on blacks in higher education of the national association for equal opportunity in higher education (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 301 240)

Spady, W. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. Interchange, 1 (1), 64-79.

Spady, W. (1971). Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. Interchange, 2 (3), 38-62.

Steele, C.M. (1992). Race and the schooling of black Americans. The Atlantic monthly, 269 (4), 67-78.

Stikes, C. S. (1984). Black students in higher education. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Stoecker, et al. (1971). Persistence in higher education: A 9-year test of a theoretical model. Journal of College Student Development, 29 (3), 196-209.

Szutz, J.J. et al. (1989). A report on student retention and graduation in the University System of Georgia. A paper presented at the joint conference of the Southern Association for institutional research and the society for college and university planning. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 315 104)

Tatum, B.D. (1999). "Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" New York: Basic Books.

Tinto, V. (1975). Vincent. Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research. Review of Educational Research, 45(1), 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1982). Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. Journal of Higher Education, 53 (6), 687-700.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving College. Illinois: University Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Illinois: University Chicago Press.

Toilver, M. (1996). Attrition. In The encyclopedia of African- American Education Vol. 1, 36-37. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Voorhees, R.A. (1987). Toward building models of community college persistence: A logit analysis. Research in Higher Education, 26(2), 115-129.

Webb, M.W. (1988). Freshman year retention at three campuses of a large urban community college district. Community – junior college quarterly research & practice, 12(3), 213-242.

Wilds, D.J. & Wilson, R. (1998). Minorities in higher education sixteenth annual status report. Washington D.C.: American Council on Education.

Williams, C. (1990). Broadening access for black students. Community, technical and junior college journal, 60(3), 4-17.

Williamson, D. R. et al. (1971). Student attrition in 2-and 4- year colleges: application of a theoretical model. Journal of College Student Development, 29(3), 210-222.

Wilson, R. (1993). Participation of African Americans in higher education. In M.J. Justiz, R. Wison, & L.G. Bjork. (Eds.), Minorities in higher education. (pp. 195-208). Arizona: American Council on Education.

Windham, P. (1995). The importance of work and other factors to attrition: A comparison of significancy and odds ratios for different outcomes. Paper presented at the annual conference of the southeastern association for community colleges (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 385 312)

VITA

Terri Lynn Johnson was born in Seattle, Washington on December 4, 1963, the daughter of Judge Charles V. Johnson and Lazelle S. Johnson. After completing her work at Holy Names Academy for Girls, Seattle, Washington in 1982, she entered The University of Washington for one year. She then attended Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. She received the degree of Batchelor of Arts from Spelman College in May 1986. She then attended The University of Central Oklahoma in Edmonds, Oklahoma where she received the degree of Master's in education in 1988. During the following years she was employed as a sixth grade Language Arts and Reading teacher at South Shore Middle School. In 1997 she entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin.

Permanent Address: 415 Randolph Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98122

This dissertation was typed by the author.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Survival Strategies of African-American Women in Community College

Author(s): Terri L. Johnson Ph.D

Corporate Source:

Publication Date: 2001

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Ph.D	Printed Name/Position/Title: Terri L Johnson Ph.D
Organization/Address: 415 Randolph Ave Seattle, WA 98122	Telephone: (206) 325-8020 FAX:
	E-Mail Address: tjohnson@scud.ctc.edu Date: 10 July 02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges
3051 Moore Hall, UCLA
Box 951521
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2000)